



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Color and its association with emotions: The power tools in branding

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Abstract

Branding is essential for businesses because it helps create a unique identity and personality for a company, product, or service. The utilization of color and its psychological implications hold substantial influence in the field of branding, as it possesses the potential to significantly impact consumers' emotions and their overall perceptions of a brand. Different colors have the potential to elicit distinct emotional responses and exert an impact on the way consumers interpret the personality and values associated with a brand. By using colors strategically, brands can explain and justify the message more articulately and precisely and create a compelling emotional connection with their audience, while helping businesses to stand out in a crowded marketplace, as a unique and memorable color scheme can differentiate them from their competitors. This conceptual study seeks to identify emotions related to specific colors as a tool to strengthen a brand stating multiple examples of the color black in products and why consumers get attracted to these specific brands. The findings of this study are directed toward marketers and scholars for a further understanding of how branding and color psychology are substantially related.

Keywords: Branding, Color psychology, Colors in branding, Emotions, Emotional branding.

Introduction

A Brand is arguably the most renowned and intricate brand-definition as being: When a brand (name, logo, etc.) is used correctly to represent a collection of tangible and intangible characteristics, value and influence are produced. Value can refer to a variety of things, including the fulfillment and promise of an encounter (from a marketing perspective), a promise of profits ahead (from a management perspective), and is viewed as a distinctive facet of intellectual property (Todor, 2014) Although there is far more interest in and understanding of brands now than there was 10 or 20 years ago, branding has only recently

come to its full significance and is now seen as a crucial function. Building equity for items that are homogenous in terms of their features, costs, and other values is a current branding challenge. Consider the world-dominating brands Pepsi and Coca-Cola. The attraction is their key strength rather than only the effectiveness of their bottling and distribution. These two brands' potential to be instantly recognized, the names, logos, and colors, symbolize both the maker's promise and the expectations of the customer (Clifton, 2009). Brands typically evoke strong emotional connections in consumers when they are appropriate to their ambitions and deeply rooted in the self (Thomson *et al.*, 2005). Given their importance in achieving objectives, self-relevant brands need to be able to evoke powerful, pleasurable emotions that are closely linked to and involve the self (Brown & Marshall, 2001). Those are what we refer to as self-relevant emotions. They consist of gratitude, delight, awe, pride, love, and trust (Batra *et al.*, 2012). Colors tend to compose brand identification (Das *et al.*, 2012) and can influence consumers' perceptions, emotions, and behavior toward a product or service (Rajain & Rathee, 2019). Color can be used strategically to evoke a specific emotion or mood and to convey a particular meaning. The utilization of color can additionally serve to distinguish a brand from

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its competitors, thereby enhancing its memorability among prospective clients. In addition, color can be a maneuver to highlight important information or call to action (Ciotti, 2019). Color theory serves as the foundational framework for establishing the essential principles and criteria that regulate the selection and application of colors in the creation of visually appealing graphics. Gaining an in-depth knowledge of the fundamental principles of color theory helps facilitate the creation and utilization of color palettes with greater efficacy, as it empowers individuals to begin unraveling the inherent logical framework behind colors. The result encompasses a distinct emotional response, atmosphere, or visual appeal (O'Connor, 2011). The use of color can have a big impact on how effective a marketing effort is, so the relationship between color and advertising is important. Color is frequently utilized to set a particular mood or deliver a particular message and can affect how customers feel about a product or service. Each color defines and evokes a special emotion in the consumers. For example, Purple and Black are associated with luxury or finer things, whereas blue builds trust, and therefore, most financial companies have logos in blue to showcase dependability (Branding Colors, 2023). Companies often use consistent color schemes in their advertising to reinforce their brand identity and create a recognizable visual image. Overall, the relationship between color and branding is a strenuous one, with various factors influencing the use of color. By understanding the psychology of colors used and their impact on consumer behavior, companies can create effective brands that connect with their customers' target audience and drive business growth (Psychology of Colors, 2023). Today, branding is a critical component of the Indian business landscape, with many Indian companies building globally recognizable brands around the world. Some of the most prosperous Indian brands include Tata, Reliance, Mahindra, and Infosys.

Understanding Colors

Color, which may be used to change mood, emotion, and conduct, has a tremendous impact on human behavior. By understanding the psychology of color, advertising professionals can create efficient ads that are well-received by their target demographic and foster business growth. Social implications are attached to colors, such as blue for males and pink for girls, where pink is related to happy feelings in women, whereas blue applies the rule to men (Jonaskaite, 2019). Color is a way of communicating and fulfilling human needs and evoking emotional responses with color change. Testing the significance and preferences of color within and between cultures can be done effectively using color palettes, color schemes, or color models (Manav 2007). According to the conventional and widely accepted theory of "color psychology," hues are what determine

how a color is perceived (Valdez, 1994). A simple like/dislike (pleasure) may convey an impression, and anybody who utilizes media of any kind is aware of the power (and unpredictable nature) of this thumbs-up/thumbs-down statistic. Another kind is arousal, an energetic signature that can range from excitement to sleepiness. A third reaction type is dominance, which is related to our survival instinct; individuals continuously evaluate who is in control to choose whether to become more or less defensive. All three of these reactions may be simultaneously evoked by color and design in general. Despite their lack of drama, these feelings and thoughts, both conscious and unconscious, have significance (Divers, 2023). Isaac Newton first created the Color Wheel in his book "Opticks." The original color wheel had seven hues—red, yellow, indigo, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet—but Johann Wolfgang von Goethe created a symmetrical color wheel that did away with indigo. The one now in use is comparable to this suggested wheel (Westland, 2007). The color wheel is categorized into three distinct categories of colors: Primary colors are defined as colors that can combine with one another to make a wide array of additional colors. Historically, the colors red, yellow, and blue have been conventionally employed. Secondary colors are generated from the amalgamation of two primary colors, namely green, orange, and purple. The last category of colors comprises tertiary colors, which consist of a combination of one primary color and one secondary color. Examples of tertiary colors include violet, vermilion, teal, magenta, amber, and chartreuse. Complementary colors constitute a significant element inside the color wheel. On the color wheel, complementary colors are opposite one another. When these hues are used together, they produce eye-catching combinations, including yellow and purple, red and green, and blue and orange.

The concept of analogous colors is very noteworthy in terms of capturing attention. Adjacent colors on the color wheel are those that are positioned near each other and exhibit a shared hue, resulting in a perceived visual harmony. Some examples include the combination of red with vermilion and orange, yellow with chartreuse, and green and blue with teal and violet. The color wheel, a circular diagram illustrating primary, secondary, and tertiary colors together with their respective tints, hues, tones, and shades, has its roots in the concept (Figure 1). The color wheel offers the chance to include when selecting colors for a color scheme - white, black, grey, and the original colors to generate more vibrant, lighter, muted, and deeper shades.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach, leveraging secondary research to analyze the psychological and emotional associations of the colors in branding with a focus on the color black. The research synthesizes findings

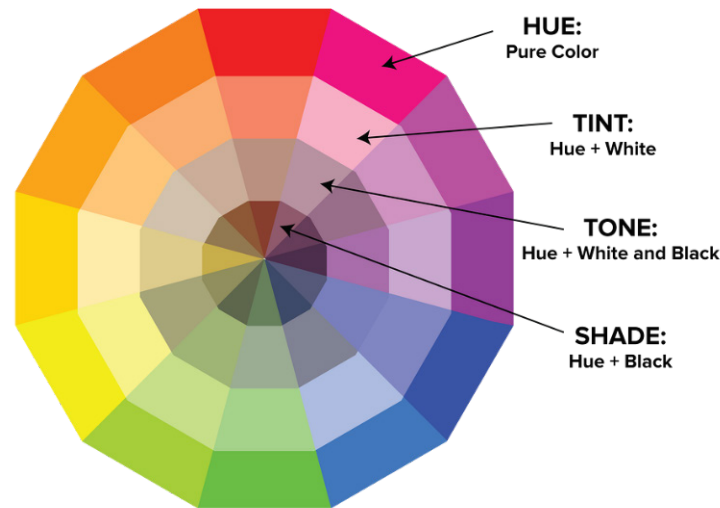


Figure 1: Color wheel (Westland, 2007)

from peer-reviewed journals, books, and reputable industry sources to identify the implications of colors in shaping brand identity and consumer perception. Data was gathered on color associations with branding from existing literature, including studies on color psychology and its influence on consumer emotions and behavior. Case studies of brands utilizing black effectively, such as luxury car manufacturers and high-end fashion houses, were reviewed to illustrate black's functional and emotional impacts on branding. The study aims to validate existing theories on color psychology while offering practical insights for marketers and scholars. Limitations include the reliance on secondary data and a singular focus on black, excluding comparative analysis with other colors.

Significance & Emotions Related to Color

Colors can be categorized into two broad groups: warm colors, which include yellow and red, and cold colors, which encompass green and blue. Colors possess the capacity to alter moods and transmute emotions. Cool colors are commonly linked to feelings of tranquility, relaxation, and comfort, while warm colors are often associated with emotions of excitement or stress (Chen *et al.*, 2020). A study conducted by (Cyr, 2010; Oros, 2014; and Valdez, 1994), it can be observed that cool colors possess a relatively shorter wavelength, whereas warm colors have a comparatively longer wavelength. In this discourse, we aim to delve deeper into the process of decoding colors. Hemphill (1996), bright colors are commonly linked to good emotions such as hope, love, and happiness. Conversely, darker hues are often associated with negative emotions, including melancholy, withdrawal, or boredom (Cmgoz, 2002). Table 1 (Demir, 2020) provides a comprehensive tabulation of the emotional perception of colors. Red has been historically linked to

several emotional experiences, including feelings of vitality, affection, fury, and intense desire. Additionally, it has been associated with attributes such as bravery, enthusiasm, and indignation. Blue has been commonly linked to various emotional states and qualities. Pleasure, relaxation, and tranquility are often associated with blue, while grief and depression are also attributed to this color. Additionally, blue is often connected to feelings of assurance, coldness, faith, and reliability. Yellow has been historically connected to several positive attributes, such as hope, warmth, optimism, brightness, happiness, and pleasantness. Orange has been associated with emotions such as enthusiasm, courage, unease, happiness, and pleasantness. Green has been matched with emotions of tranquility, protection, unity, optimism, serenity, freshness, and contentment alongside the representation of natural environments, notably forests. Purple has been associated with several emotional states, including relaxation, sadness, peace, happiness, exhaustion, power, boredom, fear, comfort, and excitement.

Additionally, it is often perceived as a symbol of dignity and stateliness. Purple has also been connected with emotions such as nostalgia, love, unease, and sorrow. White has been commonly linked to emotions such as youthfulness, pleasantness, purity, innocence, calm, hope, simplicity, and cleanliness. Black has historically been linked to emotions and concepts such as sorrow, negativity, despondency, trepidation, gravity, and wrath, often evoking imagery of mortality, loss, and calamitous occurrences. Black is commonly associated with several concepts, such as power, strength, mastery, formality, mystery, grace, and modernity. Grey is predominantly linked to adverse emotional states, such as sadness, melancholy, sorrow, boredom, perplexity, tiredness, loneliness, fury, and fear, particularly when depicted in the context of inclement weather.

Table 1: Color and emotional association (Demir, 2020)

Color	Color-emotion association
Red	Fury, affection, passion, courage, excitement, aggressiveness, speed & danger (In the Indian context- happiness, marriage, prosperity, danger, crime, and anger)
Blue	Joy, ease, calmness, serenity, trust, security, coldness, hope, optimism, happiness, coldness & sadness (In Indian context divinity, truthfulness, and royalty)
Yellow	Warmth, bliss, optimism, happiness, and hope (In the Indian context- royalty, religion, happiness, warning, decadence, illness)
Orange	Enthusiasm, courage, happiness, disturbing, distressing, & pleasantness
Green	Peacefulness, safeguarding, balance, optimism, leisure, calmness, close to nature & refreshing (In the Indian context- harmony, fertility, peace)
Purple	Nostalgic, romantic, relaxation, calmness, happiness, authority, angst, boredom comfort & excitement
White	Peace, hope, truth, trust, simplicity, cleanness, youth and innocence (In the Indian context- peace, purity, mourning, widow)
Black	Power, elegance, strength, formal, modernity, mysterious, death, mourning, tragic events, sadness, seriousness & depression (superstition, evil and death)
Gray	Sorrow, despair, despair, disinterest, perplexity, exhaustion, anger, bad weather/times

Using Colors in Branding

Color plays a significant role in consumer perception and behavior, influencing purchasing decisions and shaping brand identity (Singh, 2006). It can evoke specific moods and emotions, impacting how consumers perceive products, packaging, and advertisements (Šliburytė & Skėrytė, 2014). Coke and the brand's signature red connect emotions to fun, energy, and friendship. The effect of Netflix's love of entertainment continues. Plus, like Radio Mirchi, red is linked to love, romance, and spice and has the longest wavelength of any color. Orange is associated with excitement and enthusiasm, which is what brands such as JBL and Dunkin' Donuts bring to people. Because of its associations with sunset, Halloween, and frivolity, the Color orange also plays a crucial role in attracting. Yellow, on the other hand, has a niche and is associated with feelings of happiness. It can also be associated with feelings of anger and fear and is one of the most difficult colors to use, owing to its widespread use as a color of caution and statutory warnings. The color is used in warnings because of its long wavelength. But that's not all; McDonald's has successfully branded yellow to evoke a feeling of happiness and memory sharing by making it synonymous with their yellow and crispy fries.

Green is one of the easiest colors on the eyes and is associated with relaxation, such as in Spotify. It also results in reassurance and is thus a common color used in healthcare. Because green is directly associated with nature, hotels and resorts also use it to sell an image of greenery and calm. One disadvantage of the color is its association with jealousy. Turquoise is a rare color that often communicates positivity and recharging spirits. It is a popular choice in media, computer technology, and education because of the cleanliness it provides to a brand. Blue, the color of the sky, oceans, lakes, massiveness, and serenity, is ubiquitous and one of the most commonly used colors in brands defining stability, a comfortable relationship, and trust. It has a wide range of applications ranging from financial institutions to

beverages like Pepsi and Thumbsup and automobiles like Volkswagen or payment intermediaries like PayPal.

Purple, an intriguing color that evokes royalty, wealth, luxury, and sophistication in both men and women, is a popular color in brands that want to communicate elatedness, time, space, time, and imagination. Magenta/Pink represents logic, sophistication, compassion, kindness, support, and self-esteem. This color, which is often associated with metamorphosis, has found its way into popular brands such as LG and Lyft. Brown, the color associated with the same seriousness as black, is a preferred color when branding leather products or brands dealing with wood, implying dependability and authenticity.

Black, the color unanimously adored for power, class, and seriousness and is timelessly stylish, is used by brands that show elegance, authority, substance, and superiority, such as Adidas, Sony, and Apple. Grey or silver, another color reflecting intelligence, strength, and timelessness, is used by luxury car brands such as Mercedes, Audi, and BMW. White is used by brands such as Apple, DC, and Chanel to represent a chic, sleek style, minimalism, the perception of more space, and sophistication.

A brand's visual entity is heavily influenced by how the rest of the world perceives color, and selecting the right color not only appeals to a larger audience but also serves as a point of differentiation for the brand. For instance, black is often associated with luxury, sophistication, and authority, making it a popular choice for high-end brands. Conversely, brighter colors might be used to convey excitement or playfulness. Therefore, marketers strategically use color to create a desired impression and connect with their target audience on an emotional level.

Impact of Color on Consumer Emotions

Color plays an essential part in the marketing & branding of commodities. The possibility of using a large variety of colors and differentiating on and around objects leads individuals

to select the appropriate color and control emotions (Jonaskaite, 2020). Colors are instrumental in influencing and affecting the cognitive ability and influencing the purchase behavior (Eroglu *et al*, 2003). The color of a brand helps the consumer in recognizing and identifying the brand (Abril *et al*, 2009). A consumer associates with sociological factors such as beliefs and cultures and it has been evident that it is not just the color but also its symbolic meaning that can affect consumers' minds (Chebat & Morrin, 2007). To elicit the necessary emotional reaction and strengthen relationships with customers, marketers deliberately use colors in logos, packaging, and advertising, carefully choosing them to match their brand identity and target demographic (Broeder & Evelien, 2018). Brands may affect how consumers view their goods and services by strategically using color to appeal to ingrained psychological reactions. Color has the power to significantly influence brand identification, influence consumer behavior, and leave a lasting impact on the target audience by arousing particular feelings and moods.

Black Evokes Emotions Unmatched

Out of all colors on the wide spectrum, black holds its superiority and identity. It is widely associated with power because it is the only color, which when combined/mixed with other colors, does not lose its identity. Black color possesses inherent qualities of strength and adaptability, which enable it to captivate and mask any imperfections it may possess. The concept is often linked with high-priced merchandise and elicits a sense of power and seriousness, instilling a sense of unease in others due to its mysterious nature. Bruna (2023), the color black has been linked to various positive attributes such as power, strength, formality, modernity, and elegance. Black has historically been linked to a variety of strong feelings, including mystery, authority, sophistication, and elegance. This powerful symbolism may be used effectively in marketing, enabling companies to appeal to ingrained psychological reactions and establish closer bonds with their target markets (Oladumiye & Ebenezer, 2018). Conversely, black has also been connected to negative emotions including melancholy, depression, fear, seriousness, and rage. These negative associations contribute to the perception of black as representing themes of death, illness, and mourning (O'Connor, 2011). According to a recent independent study including a sample size of 1000 individuals, there exists a purported association between the color black and many positive attributes such as confidence, intelligence, and arrogance. The survey additionally revealed that black is a highly favored color choice among both men and women. The data reveals that most women, namely 66%, expressed a preference for men wearing the color black. Additionally, it was observed that a significant proportion of men, approximately 46%, showed an appreciation for black

attire for women (Bolton, 2015). Black is widely regarded as a timeless and classy choice within the realm of fashion. Throughout history, the color black has consistently remained fashionable, including a wide range of items such as basic black trousers, elegant black dresses, as well as black accessories like belts, wallets, sunglasses, and even automobiles. A brand with a black color scheme emits an aura of sophistication and refinement. Athletic brands that want to maintain their core values, such as Adidas, choose black to remain neutral (Brackett, 2020). The industries that most commonly utilize black in their branding are clothing, shoes, vehicles & appliances. For instance, the tobacco business has purposefully used black packaging to convey a perception of superior quality and market supremacy (Dewhirst, 2017). In addition to exuding a sense of refinement and elegance, the glossy, textured black backgrounds also capitalize on the cross-cultural connotations of black with distinction, authority, and power. The industry that has nil or minimum use of the color black is the aviation industry due to its properties of low visibility and heat absorption properties.

The first presence of "Black" in the automobile industry was by Henry Ford for His Ford Motor Company. He used the color black not only as it was inexpensive but also because, in that era, most machinery/railway tracks, transportation carriages, etc., were black (Veer, 2004). For automobiles, black and white are the two most popular shades, but black cars provide the sleepy look that never dies. Black cars are also known to have high resale value (Iqbal, 2023). Black cars are known to enhance a car's curves and lines, giving it the appearance of being larger and sleeker. The owner of the car is overjoyed by the car's presence on the road (Meister, P., 2023). Black in luxury cars has always been associated with attracting attention because it creates an aura of grandeur and makes a vehicle appear longer and sleeker. "Lack automatically grants your car a superior status, no matter the model. And a black *luxury car* naturally becomes the king of kings!" When used strategically in marketing, black may create feelings of exclusivity, grandeur, and luxury, which is why high-end businesses and goods frequently utilize it (Kim and others, 2020). A product or service may be positioned as smart, attractive, and desirable by using black, which exudes elegance and refinement. Hence, it can be rightly concluded that black can evoke feelings of superiority, sophistication, elatedness, power, and speed. In other industries, black is a popular choice with brands such as the WWF logo, which redefines elegance while remaining eternally modern. A slick and modern NIKE Swoosh and The New York Times Logo that exudes timelessness and traditionalism. Tiffany & Co's logo is simple yet elegant. Other brands, such as Apple, represent minimalism, bold thinking, and modernity. Other popular brands include Adidas for neutrality and Prada for dynamic quality. Sony's logo is a simple signature for strength, while

Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Ralph Lauren represent luxury, class, and elite social status (Kedia S, 2020).

Although black is a common choice in cars, it continues to be a choice for many who seek luxury, simplicity, sleek and modern design, and superiority in social status. Customers may be prompted to investigate and interact with the brand or product more thoroughly if black is used strategically to create a feeling of the unknown. Marketers may use the psychological effects of black to create compelling stories that engage and captivate their target audience, strengthening emotional bonds and boosting brand loyalty (Liburytė and Skėrytė, 2014). Hence, those seeking other emotional satisfaction or aesthetic requirements shall not choose black as a color for their cars.

Conclusion

Color is a prime aspect of branding because it influences the perceptions and emotions that consumers attach to a particular brand. Different colors have different psychological effects on human emotions and can elicit a variety of responses from consumers. Red, for example, is commonly related to energy, passion, and excitement, whereas blue is very often matched with trust, calmness, and professionalism. Brands can create a strong emotional connection with consumers and differentiate themselves from competitors by strategically using colors that resonate with their target audience. Colors can also help convey a brand's personality and values, which can be critical in placing a long-term impression on consumers' minds. Overall, the use of color in the domain of branding is a power-packed tool that can assist businesses in effectively communicating their message and connecting with their audience on a deeper level.

Limitation of the Study

This is a conceptual study that only looks at one color—black—and the feelings it evokes via branding. Furthermore, the study offers no solid proof of the existence of additional hues in the actual world or the established feelings connected to them. The study's sole goal is to validate previous studies.

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