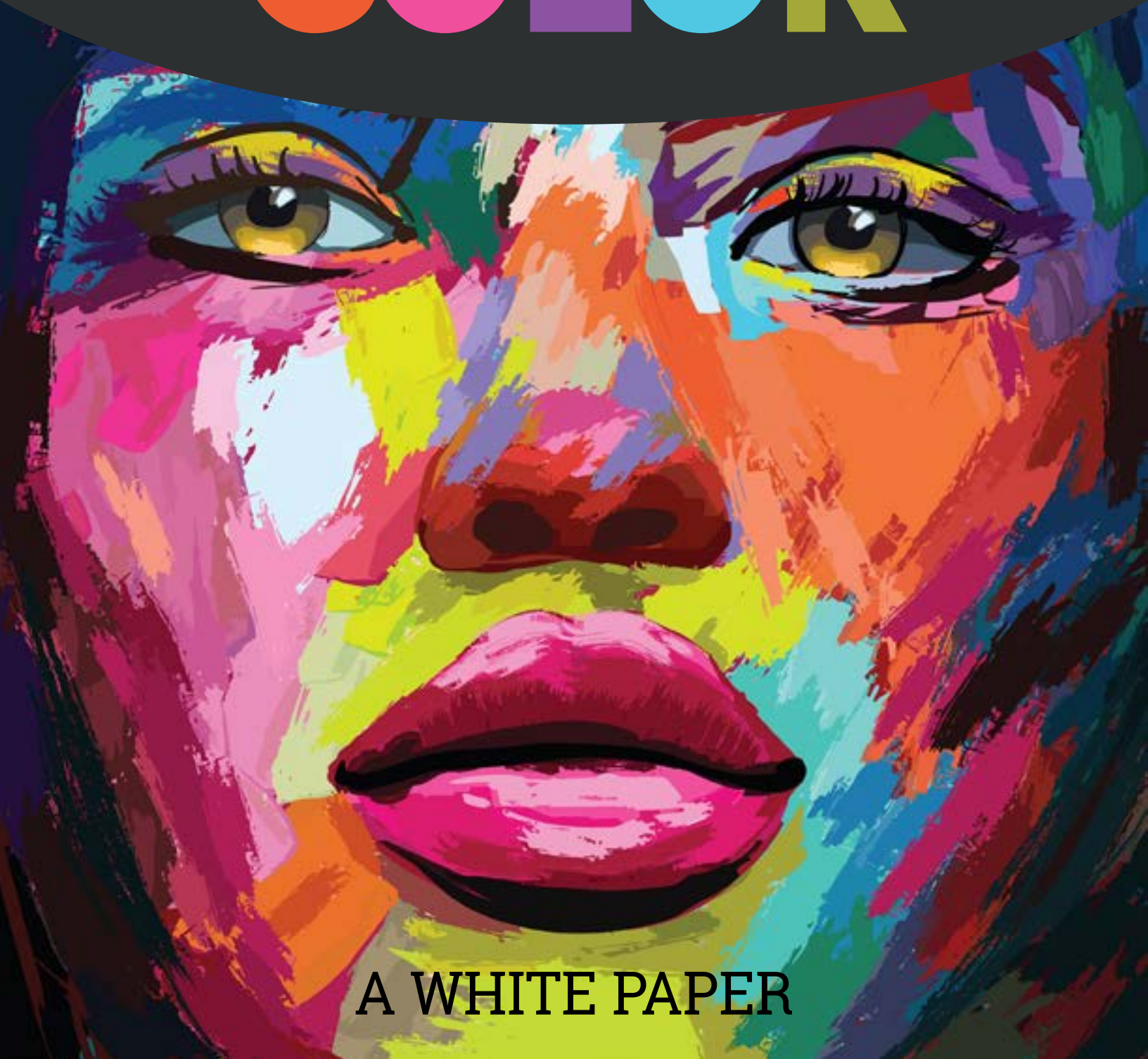


SWAY EMOTIONS WITH
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
COLOR



A WHITE PAPER

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1

Executive Summary

Colors speak a language words just can't replicate.

With over 10 million colors in the world, it can be overwhelming to find the right fit for your brand. But color psychology can give you a running start! Color psychology is the study of colors in relation to human behavior and the decisions people make each day.

In this white paper, you'll learn how to use colors to evoke emotions, spur spontaneity, and accurately communicate the most cherished attributes of your brand. Probe the subconscious messaging of nine specific colors and explore how brands worldwide employ the power of color each day!



2

Introduction

Feeling blue?

Maybe it's the color of the room you're sitting in.

Color psychology is something that has fascinated people for decades. Artists and interior designers have long believed that colors can dramatically affect moods and emotions, and color marketing has become a hot topic in marketing, art, design, and print.



3

The Psychology of Color

Color psychology is intriguing, yet it is also mysterious and somewhat subjective. What is this strange science, and – more importantly – how does it work?

Color psychology is the study of colors in relation to human behavior. It aims to determine how color affects day-to-day decisions, such as the foods you eat or the purchases you make. When you think about the role of colors in marketing, you might ask questions like these:

- Will the hues of a package prompt a prospect to choose one brand over another?
- Does the bright tint of a brochure make someone more likely to pick it up?
- Would the color of a car compel people to spend more than they should?

The short answer is yes.

Consider these statistics:

- ✓ Eighty-five percent of consumers cite color as the primary reason for choosing which products to buy.
- ✓ Up to 90 percent of impulse decisions are based solely on a product's colors.
- ✓ Forty-two percent of website viewers find that the site's colors impact their opinions more than any other factor.
- ✓ Ninety-three percent of shoppers focus on visual appearance alone when considering a purchase, and colors make a huge impression. For example, only 1% of people say they would view a black product as something "cheap."

Colors are significant, and mastering the basics of color psychology can help you evoke emotions and meet consumers' expectations for your products or brand.

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Colors Influence the Soul

If you entered a neon orange room, would it “feel” different than if you entered a room that was all white?

Of course! That’s because colors can bypass rational thought and speak straight to the subconscious. As painter Wassily Kandinsky once said, “color directly influences the soul.”

But why (and how) does color influence perception and behavior?

Research shows that color produces two general reactions:

1. Arousal Reactions
2. Evaluative Reactions

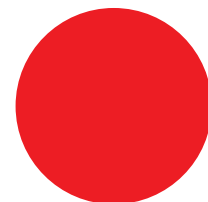
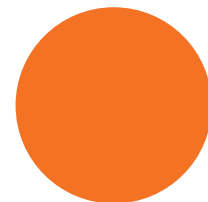
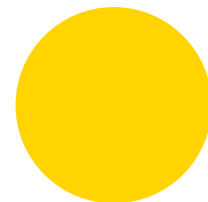
Arousal Reactions:

The level of arousal people feel relates to the physiological response they have to certain stimuli.

When you are excited, you feel more eager, activated, and physically responsive. In high arousal situations, adrenaline spikes, and the heart beats faster.

Studies reveal that warm colors (yellow, orange, red) increase the arousal response. Because this activates prospective buyers, the use of warm colors can spur action – like making an impulse purchase or sharing an image on social media. On a foundational level, arousal increases spontaneity because it inhibits cortical functioning, causing people to spend less time rationalizing or debating.

Aroused people are more likely to act immediately. If you want to draw people through your front door or prompt someone to make an immediate decision, activate the subconscious through warm colors.



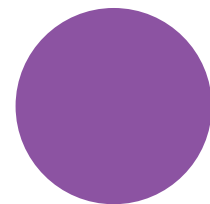
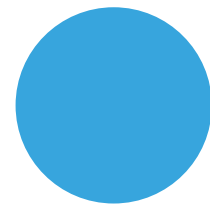
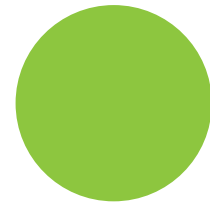


Evaluative Reactions

The second reaction to color is evaluative, which corresponds to whether or not people “like” your choice of color.

People tend to prefer colors with shorter wavelengths, like green, blue, and purple. Cool colors (which remind people of nature, water, and sky) encourage relaxation. These hues bring a peaceful, calming feel that seems to “slow down” time.

People surrounded by cool colors can comprehend more complex information, are more likely to extend their shopping trips, and may perceive a shorter wait time in checkout lines. To increase relaxation or patience in your environment, try purple, blue, and green.



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Meeting Audience Expectations

Color interpretation doesn't take place in a vacuum.

Your perception of visual cues is linked to your upbringing, gender, location, values, and lived experiences. Aesthetically pleasing designs are those that meet the expectations of your audience, so when you choose marketing colors for brochures, logos, or signage, do this with your target audience in mind.

The human brain prefers an immediately recognizable brand, and color can play an important role. Here, the key is to fit the color closely with your product or service. Ask yourself: "what attributes do I want to communicate about my product, and does the color I've chosen do this appropriately?" For example, would brown toothpaste feel "right" to someone concerned about good hygiene? Would a bright orange package be a good fit for a bottle of sleeping pills? While this may seem like common sense, it may involve a bit of market research and strategic thinking.



Color Your Communication

If you had to guess, how many colors would you say they are?

A quick Google search indicates a minimum of 10 million, but variables can take this number as high as 18 decillions! When you want to shape your message using color, the possibilities are endless. Here are the impacts of nine particular colors and how you can use them to your advantage:

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RED

The color red is powerful.

Red is an energizing color that can reflect affection, terror, strength, aggression, or authority. Red has been shown to increase heart rates and create a sense of urgency. People featured in front of red backgrounds are generally seen as more attractive when silhouetted against other colors, so reds are great for photo backdrops, booklet covers, window displays, and more.

Red surfaces give people a burst of adrenaline, so reds are good for concepts related to fitness, acceleration, competition, and courage.

Brands that use red: Coke, YouTube, CNN, Target



ORANGE

Orange combines the power of red with the friendliness and fun of yellow.

In marketing, orange is associated with enthusiasm, freshness or flavor, and transformation. Orange is often linked with warmth, food, shelter, motivation, and affordability.

Orange favors positive vibes and encourages buying, so it is a sharp attention-grabber or call to action. If an intense orange is used, it may be associated with aggression. Beware of going too extreme.

Brands that use orange: Home Depot, Nickelodeon, Fanta Soda, Harley Davidson, HubSpot



YELLOW

Yellow is associated with joy, happiness, optimism, energy, and adventure.

It is the easiest color to see, and the first color infants respond to. This youthful color stimulates thought and generates muscle energy. Yellows are great for inspiring, grabbing attention, arousing appetites, implying freshness, conveying friendliness, or lifting people's spirits.

Yellow also screams for attention, so you can use it to grab interest. Avoid overdoing things by contrasting yellow in with another color.

Brands that use yellow: Subway, Ferrari, McDonald's, IKEA, Snapchat, Lays



GREEN

Green portrays balance, harmony, nature, logic, and emotion.

In nature, green reflects growth, life, and health. Seeing the color green has also been linked to more creative thinking and opulence, so greens are good options for brands featuring innovation, creativity, artistic specialties, or proactive growth.

Green is the simplest color to process mentally and is a good fit for finance, fitness, or entertainment brands, and also for eco-friendly products.

Brands that use green: Starbucks, BNP Paribas, Heinenken, Lacoste, John Deere



BLUE

Did you know people are more likely to tell you that blue is their favorite color than any other shade?

Nature-themed blues can call forth feelings of calmness and are perfect for striking a tranquil tone. Turquoise or royal blues can project stability, trust, and reliability, which is strategic for brands looking to project productivity or security.

One caution about blue: it is not very appetizing. Physiologically, blue is often a sign of poison or spoilage. Some weight loss plans even recommend eating your food off a blue plate to squelch hunger!

Brands that use blue: American Express, IBM, Gap, HP, Bausch & Lomb



PINK

Pink typically carries a romantic or feminine tone and is associated with children, playfulness, romanticism, or unconditional love.

Pink can symbolize charm, courtesy, vibrancy, or things that are sweet and small. While neon pink may project a rebellious, independent spirit, soft pinks bring a soothing, calming vibe. This is why the Iowa Hawkeyes chose to paint the locker room for visiting teams at its famous Kinnick Stadium – to placate opponents before the start of each game.

Brands that use pink: Barbie, Victoria Secret, Baskin Robbins, Pepto Bismol, Taco Bell



VIOLET

Purple projects tones of pampering and royalty, which are often connected to concepts of beauty, tenderness, or anti-aging.

People tend to link greyish violet with sophistication, so these hues can be nice when you're trying to communicate wholesomeness or make a stylish impression. Consider bold purples for anything ritzy, or try subtle violet/grey hues for home apparel, personal products, product labels, and more.

Brands that use violet: Hallmark, BBC, FedEx, Cadbury, Monster, Yahoo!



BLACK

Black is perceived as powerful and sleek, conveying a cutting-edge, luxurious quality.

Black is the color of power, seriousness, and independence. It is a reserved color and is perfect for high contrast and legibility in design.

Companies the use black: Nike, Louis Vuitton, Gillette, Gucci, Cartier



WHITE

White represents purity, innocence, and cleanliness.

This color is ideal for those wanting to convey simplicity, transparency, or beauty. White also represents new beginnings and peace and can strategically combine other strong colors to create negative space and possibility in your designs.

Companies that use white: Adobe, World Wildlife Fund, Apple

Finding Your Fit

Ready to go a step further?

To simplify things, some psychologists break colors into broad categories, like utilitarian versus hedonic products, or a prevention versus gain focus.

Utilitarian products (those providing functional benefits) are associated with gray, black, blue, and green. From ruggedness to simple accessibility, these colors might be best for things like car tires, technology, cleaning products, carpentry, or landscaping.

Hedonic products (those providing social or sensory benefits) are associated with red, yellow, pink, and purple. From excitement to sincerity, these colors may be best for things like hot tubs, bakeries, theme parks, relationships, and essential oils.

A Prevention Focus frames marketing messages around the problems a product can avert. Red, orange, and neon colors can activate an avoidance mindset (think of a stop sign or a construction barrel). These colors are excellent for identifying problems and advocating for safety, personal health, germ prevention, etc.

A Gain Focus frames marketing messages around the benefits a product can provide. Blues and greens cultivate a mindset of openness and may enhance appeal for brands selling security, reliability, peace, and comfort.

Putting it All Together

Match your brand attributes and color palettes with the appropriate level of content:

- ✓ Choose fewer colors for products that are serious in nature
- ✓ Choose more colors for products that are lighthearted in nature
- ✓ If your design is complex or heavy on content, then reduce color levels
- ✓ If your design is simple or light on content, then increase color levels

Conclusion

Color is grounded in science, but it will always be an art!

Color is a powerful communication tool, so understanding it can help you signal action, sway the mood, and even influence physiological reactions.

Experiment with different color combinations, and you can attract more attention, improve customer experiences, and set your brand apart in a crowd. Whether your look is simple and sophisticated or edgy and eccentric, colors build emotional bridges like nothing else can.



About Your Sponsor

Just as people associate colors with specific memories or feelings (like the fuchsia from a bouquet reminds a bride of the exhilaration of her wedding day), your marketing colors will become an emotional ambassador of your business.

People respond to things they can smell, see, and touch, so nothing amplifies your message, like bold, colorful print products. From branding style guides and brochures to full-sized displays or posters, we can help you express yourself with finesse. Whether you need a schematic design consult or a product label refresh, bring that wow factor to your professional printings with beautiful, unforgettable colors.

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