

Module 10: "Color reacts (psychological)"

Lecture 27: "Psychological Effect of Color"

The Lecture Contains:

- Psychological Effects of Color
- Psychological Properties of Colours
- Cultural Contexts of Colors
- Conclusion

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Psychological Effects of Color

Physiological reactions: Dr. Norman Donald, Professor of Computer Science at NW University, Chicago, USA made interesting observation through his research on Color and Emotion.

Although there has not been a great deal of conclusive evidence linking colors to specific responses, research suggests that certain colors do evoke physical responses. There are colors that can evoke the taste (salty, sweetish, and sour). Color can influence our emotions, our activities. Our interaction varies with people, things and ideas due to the influence of colors. Much has been studied and written about color and its impact on our daily lives. However, it is extremely difficult to quantify the human relation with colors and affect. In most of the traditional countries and cultures color may become a binding force.

Psychologists have found the following results from the effect of color in general-

-  RED: warmth, love, anger, danger, boldness, excitement, speed, strength, energy, determination, desire, passion, courage
-  ORANGE: cheerfulness, low cost, affordability, enthusiasm, stimulation, creativity, aggression, food
-  YELLOW: attention-grabbing, comfort, liveliness, cowardliness, hunger, optimism, overwhelm, Summer, comfort, liveliness, intellect, happiness, energy, conflict
-  GREEN: durability, reliability, environmental, luxurious, optimism, well-being, nature, calm, relaxation, Spring, safety, honesty, optimism, harmony, freshness
-  BLUE: peace, professionalism, loyalty, reliability, honour, melancholia, boredom, coldness, Winter, depth, stability, professionalism, honour, trust
-  PURPLE: power, royalty, nobility, elegance, sophistication, artificial, luxury, mystery, royalty, elegance, magic
-  GRAY: conservatism, traditionalism, intelligence, serious, dull, uninteresting
-  BROWN: relaxing, confident, casual, reassuring, nature, earthy, solid, reliable, genuine, Autumn, endurance
-  GRAY: conservatism, traditionalism, intelligence, serious, dull, uninteresting
-  BLACK: Elegance, sophistication, formality, power, strength, illegality, depression, morbidity, night, death
-  WHITE: Cleanliness, purity, newness, virginity, peace, innocence, simplicity, sterility, snow, ice, cold simplicity, sterility, snow, ice, cold

(Ref. http://changingminds.org/disciplines/communication/color_effect.htm ; June 8, 2012) Color Psychology



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Psychological Properties of Colours

There are four psychological primary colours - red, blue, yellow and green. They relate respectively to the body, the mind, the emotions and the essential balance between these three.



Plate4 Symbolism of Color

The golden yellow symbol of 'M' shaped French-fry (Plate4) on a red background automatically communicates to the urban young kids of a brand that closely relates to their taste. The color of yellow and red has natural meaning to the young people. The symbol does not have to write or express through wordy versions. The color and the visual representation communicates and serves the purpose.

"Psychologists have understood that colors have deep subliminal meanings that affect our thinking and rational. They have symbolic meaning that changes amongst different cultures and countries. We are faced with color choices all the time. The first crucial decision of the day usually comes in the morning when deciding what to wear. Often times we will choose our clothes based on the color of the mood we are feeling or wish to portray that day. Color research and planning is a vital part of the design process. Before you even begin a design you must choose the appropriate colors that are effective in re enforcing the brand, message and overall tone." (Ref. <http://www.digitalskratch.com/color-psychology.php> ; June 8, 2012)

Prof. Kate Smith, CMG, CfYH has written on "India-- A Country of Symbolic Colors" and explained in length the effect of color in Indian society through ages.

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"India has always been exalted and remembered fondly as the country of colors. To an outsider, its colorful culture, streets, and stories seem like a page out of an ancient folk tale. But color, in essence, has been a large part of the Indian consciousness.

From the deep orange marigold flowers that bejewel almost every celebration to the deep hues of red that deck up the bride on her most important day, color in India has, over time, become synonymous with religion - an expression of faith and beliefs. In a country where a deep understanding of the prevalent diversity is perhaps the only common thread that ties its people together, India is a magical experience that ought not to be missed.

In a country as diverse and culturally vibrant as India, it is perhaps the common, simple expressions of color that hold together the multitudes of outlooks, lifestyles, and traditions. The symbolism of color stands out and controls every aspect of life in India, be it religion, politics, festivals, or celebrations. In India, be it the north, south, west, or east, color and culture go hand in hand."

(Ref. <http://www.sensationalcolor.com/color-messages-meanings/color-around-the-globe/india-a-country-of-symbolic-colors.html> ; June 8, 2012 <http://www.colour-affects.co.uk/psychological-properties-of-colours> ; June 9, 2012)

Human beings are not very sure about their reaction and understanding of color sensations and emotions which is examined in the field of 'color psychology'. A simple example is that humans often say that colors and color schemes have temperature, for example reds and oranges are warm and blues are cool. The sensation is synonymous to feeling. There is no color physically cool or warm. It is the visual perception that evokes certain feeling.



Plate4 Are colors are inherent Warm?



Colors inherently cool?



The feeling of combination of colors

(Source: http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&biw=1350&bih=504&q=Landscape%20photographs&bav=on.2.or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.cf.osb&noj=1&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbn=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=oxTST53zCIHZrQe1ieX7Dw ; June 8, 2012)

'These sorts of reactions are pretty straight-forward, as the colors are directly associated in our minds with temperatures: orange-red fire, cool blue water, cold ice and snow. More interesting and controversial is the idea that colors have psychological associations...' (Ref. <http://www.sensationalcolor.com/color-messages-meanings/color-around-the-globe/india-a-country-of-symbolic-colors.html> ; June 8, 2012)

(Read more: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_psychology & [the Wikipedia Color Psychology Web page](#).

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Cultural Contexts of Colors

Color	Positives	Negatives
Gray	Elegance, humility, respect, reverence, stability, subtlety, timelessness, wisdom	Anachronism, boredom, decay, decrepitude, dullness, dust, pollution, urban sprawl
Red	Passion, strength, energy, fire, love, sex, excitement, speed, heat, leadership, masculinity, power	Danger, fire, gaudiness, blood, war, anger, revolution, radicalism, aggression, stop
Blue	Seas, skies, peace, unity, harmony, tranquillity, calmness, coolness, confidence, water, ice, loyalty, conservatism, dependability, cleanliness, technology, winter	Depression, coldness, idealism, obscenity, ice, tackiness, winter
Green	Nature, spring, fertility, youth, environment, wealth, money (US), good luck, vigour, generosity, go, grass	Aggression, inexperience, envy, misfortune, jealousy, money, illness, greed
Yellow	Sunlight, joy, happiness, optimism, idealism, wealth (gold), summer, hope, air	Cowardice, illness (quarantine), hazards, dishonesty, avarice, ossification, weakness
Purple	Sensuality, spirituality, creativity, wealth, royalty, nobility, ceremony, mystery, wisdom, enlightenment	Arrogance, flamboyance, gaudiness, mourning, profanity, exaggeration, confusion
Orange	Buddhism, energy, balance, heat, fire, enthusiasm, flamboyance, playfulness	Aggression, arrogance, flamboyance, gaudiness, overemotion, warning, danger, fire
White	Reverence, purity, snow, peace, innocence, cleanliness, simplicity, security, humility, marriage, sterility, winter	Coldness, sterility, clinicism, surrender, cowardice, fearfulness, winter, unimaginative
Black	Modernity, power, sophistication, formality, elegance, wealth, mystery, style	Evil, death, fear, anonymity, anger, sadness, remorse, mourning, unhappiness, mystery
Brown	Calm, depth, natural organisms, nature, richness, rusticism, stability, tradition	Anachronism, boorishness, dirt, dullness, filth, heaviness, poverty, roughness

(Ref. http://www.uvsc.edu/disted/decourses/dgm/2740/IN/steinja/lessons/05/I05_08.html ; June 9, 2012

References: Frank, M. G. & Gilovich, T. (1988). The dark side of self and social perception: Black uniforms and aggression in professional sports. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54, 74-83)

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Conclusion

The topic Color of Meaning or Meaning of Color have been interest of psychologists for centuries. Color has been the most powerful mode of visual communication. It is the most powerful non-verbal communication that human beings have established since beginning of human history.

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