

How Colours Affect Communication

By

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Introduction

Language is considered the most important tool of communication, the basis of interaction, sharing of ideas and emotions and also the means by which we transmit information amongst ourselves and also through ages from one culture and generation to the next. But we also communicate through a language beyond the spoken and written word—the messages that we convey through our body movements, our clothing, facial expressions, our personal appearance and paralanguage. Even the artifacts, the architectural structures, the decor and the interiors and magnificent colours emanate deep messages and influence our communication. The language of colours is the language that touches us and communicates with our heart and soul. Nature is the most exquisite canvas and varying colours and hues help us understand the messages that life gives us.

Can we visualize a world without colors, without sunrise gold, without the crimson sunset, without russet and green orchards, without azure oceans, without grey floating clouds and without spectacular rainbow dancing on blue sky? Answer is No, we cannot. Colours form an integral part of our powerful existence and communicate to us the varying shades and dimensions of life—they convey meanings that are **beyond the power of ink** and speak what **Conrad Hall**, the American cinematographer calls, "an extraordinary subtle language". Colors have the magic of creating a dramatic impact on our moods feeling and emotions. They convey deep subliminal meaning that affects our thinking and emotions. **Georgia O' Keeffe**, the great American artist puts it very beautifully, "I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way— things I had no words for."

Colours and Emotions

We all recognize cliché's of color and emotions—'feeling blue', 'green with envy', 'browned off' and 'in the pink' and 'yellow belly' to name a few. It has been established that specific colors are associated with particular human moods, from serene to playful to powerful. We tend to see some moods in terms of a specific color, while others are associated with more than one color. If red color stands for something exciting and stimulating, yellow reflects cheerfulness, joy and purity. Black has very powerful and strong connotations and blue conveys serenity and peace. Additionally research has shown that highly motivated people prefer cool and somber colors like blue and green while less motivated people prefer warm and brighter colors like red and yellow. **Pablo Picasso** the great painter, asserts that colors, like features, follow the change of emotions. Of course, our feelings about colors is often deeply personal and can be the result of our childhood associations, and our social, cultural and political environment. It is very difficult to discern whether we pick colors that are truly associated with specific emotion or whether our choices are actually affected by learned stereotypes. **Clive Bell**, the great art critic defends the view that we have a special emotion, aesthetic emotion, in response to lines, shapes and colours when they exhibit "significant form". Revati Sharma, the only Indian artist to be invited to the prestigious **Masterpieces Art Fair** in London in 2012 says, "It is the way I react to the universe. Whether I am depressed or elated, colours help me express better".

An experiment with exuberant colours in **decor** can make our homes and offices speak of our style statement. Stunning range of colours in interiors elicit many emotions and redefine life for us. They weave magic and infuse cheerful vibes. Colours make the space vibrant and mesmerizing and express warmth and bliss beyond the confines of words.

Colours and Culture

Colors also have cultural, political and religious connotations and connections. In fact colors have contingent historical occurrence whose meaning, like language, lies in a particular context in which it relates with different ideas. For e.g. if in India and China, red color is associated with good luck and celebrations, in South Africa it is associated with mourning. Colors have different religious undertones as well. Saffron, in India, is associated with Hinduism and green is associated with Islam. Colors also have connections with political ideologies. The color red symbolizes left wing ideologies and some political parties are recognized

by the color they use. During Indian general Election 2014 result analysis, the news broadcasting studio of NDTV 24X7 graphically projected maximum number of men and women in saffron color(symbolic of a party) occupying seats in Parliament.

Colours and Brand Identity

Colours create visual poetry and have certain wave lengths which can be felt and experienced. That is why different colors are used to induce the consumers' response to a message. In fact colors create brand awareness. The VIRGIN GROUP uses red color to convey its confidence and energy. The Red color of COCA COLA has played incredibly significant role in creating a brand identity. The blue color of IBM signifies stability and conservatism where the brown color of UPS signifies reliability and trust. Social sites like FACEBOOK and TWITTER use lighter blue because it reflects friendliness and relaxation. The red and yellow color used in most of eating joints (McDonalds') helps increase appetite. QUEO the European bath ware designer company has tried to infuse zest and zing to the concept of bathrooms by creating myriad hues through LED lighting to match different moods — for example, the magic of green for tranquility and the charm of lavender for serendipity. Colours have become part of our **popular culture** and it is interesting to find how we associate our favourite sports teams by their team colour.

Colours significance in management is rightly emphasised by Jacob Olesen: 'Is there anyone in the industry that doubts the impact of colours? Irrespective of whether you are involved in marketing, retailing, designing or advertising, there is a basic need of being as informed as possible about various colours and how they communicate instantly. Colour plays an important role in how a company's' brand is perceived. Whether it is a fashion brand trying to connect to a youthful audience or a medical supplies store trying to strengthen customer trust, strategists can study colour meanings to help to better attract and connect to firms' ideal customer. Colour psychology can be used to help build a strong, relatable brand enabling an everlasting relationship between the user and the brand.

Colour psychology is the study of colours in relation to human behaviour. It aims to determine how colour affects our day to day decisions such as the items we buy. Does the colour of a dress compel us into purchase? Do the colours of a package make us choose one brand over another? Does the colour of an icon make us more likely to click on it? The sure short answer is yes. But it is indeed the why part which is a bit more complicated. Colour meanings can have an impact on why we prefer certain colours over others. The same colour can also have different meanings that are dependent on our upbringing, gender, location, values, and a variety of other factors.

Different colours and their meanings in business

Red colour meaning in business

Most commonly it is used for action oriented products and brands. Red colour emits to people the signal to act. However, this colour needs to be handled rather judiciously: you do not want the viewer to feel overwhelmed and yet you would want to command or encourage movement. While using Red in business promotion, it should be used as an accent colour to tempt buyers to buy on an impulse. A touch of red to a website can help portray the business as energy- driven and exciting. Marketing colours like red can capture attention. Meaning of red colour is associated with excitement, passion, danger, energy, and action. It is noted that some brands use red for 'order now' buttons or for their packaging as a way to stand out on the shelf. In colour psychology, red is the most intense and vibrant colour. So, it helps in provoking the strongest emotions. Red colour also denotes danger so it is advisable to use the colour sparingly.

Red is the iconic colour used for brands like Coca Cola, Kellogg, Pizza Hut, Canon, Virgin Atlantic and YouTube. The colour red tends to encourage appetite hence why brands like Coca Cola use it often in their branding. They also use words like happiness in their branding so they use the colour red to build excitement. YouTube most likely uses the colour red due to the excitement of watching videos online. Notice how the red part of their logo is the play button which can help compel someone into action. It encourages viewers to want to press play on their videos.

Orange colour meaning in business

Often used for Suggesting values and discounts, orange in business suggests adventure, fun and travel. It is a beneficial colour for hotels, travel companies and resorts and is also known to stimulate social communication. Orange colour is lighter than red but bright enough to projected as friendlier,

approachable and less aggressive. It does contains negative meanings in business like being loud, raucous and frivolous. In colour psychology, orange represents creativity, adventure, enthusiasm, success and balance. The colour orange adds a bit of fun to any picture, website, or marketing material it is used on. Despite it's attractiveness. It is not as commanding as the colour red. Many marketers use the colour for call to actions or areas of a website that they want to draw the eye too.

Orange's colour meaning shines through in logos like Nickelodeon, Fanta, Crush, Gulf and The Home Depot. Nickelodeon is a children's channel and so the logo accurately represents the creativity and enthusiasm that a children's show would need through their playful orange colour.

Yellow colour meaning in business

Colour experts recommend yellow for use in children's industry as this colour's showcases stimulation, creativity and wisdom. Yellow could also be used in promoting point of sale purchases especially when the promoter wants to attract the customer's attention quickly. Many fast food joints are known to use red and yellow where the red colour meanings in business encourage people to eat more whereas the yellow encourages them to move quickly like MacDonald. It is best to avoid the use of yellow to sell costly or luxurious men's items as they would be perceived as unsophisticated. A marketer should also avoid using dull versions of yellow (mustard) as these portray ill health and disease. In colour psychology, the colour meaning of colour yellow revolves around sunshine. It evokes feelings of happiness, positivity, optimism, and summer but also of deceit and warning. Some brands choose to use a cheerful yellow colour as the background or border for their package design.

The colour yellow is used by brands such as Ferrari, Nikon, DHL, Subway and Ikea. Many people dream of driving a Ferrari. The luxury brand is associated with this feeling of happiness, summer and a carefree lifestyle. The Ikea brand also uses the colour yellow in their branding. What does buying furniture have to do with happiness? Well, let's look at who's likely buying those products. Many people who've just bought their first home or are moving out for the first time, or renovating their dwelling units will head to Ikea to buy products to furnish their home. This act is usually filled with happiness and optimism for the new change making yellow a great colour to associate with the brand.

Green colour meaning in business

No other colour meaning in business symbolize growth and abundance as much as the colour Green. It is used invariably to advertise safety in drugs and medicines as well as a sign of vegetarianism plus, when the corporate bodies want to inform public at large the steps taken by them for environment conservation. . Green represents nature, prosperity and money. It is especially recommended for health and healing. For financial websites, dark green is a good colour while lime green may be used to create a buzz about products on sale or an upcoming offer. Again in colour psychology, green is highly connected to nature and money. Growth, fertility, health, and generosity are some of the positive meanings for the colour. It also carries some negative associations such as envy or jealousy. If the enterprise in under consideration is in the health or fitness niche, then it might choose to add more green to its online store. For example, the homepage banner image or logo might have a green background.

The use of green is made popular by brands such as Tropicana, Bp, Animal Planet and Roots. Roots is a fashion retailer. However, when browsing their banner images and marketing materials, one often find their models in natural outdoor settings. The green logo blends well with their nature and its images also helps them attract outdoor enthusiasts as their target market. So even if products don't necessarily tie to a niche, green colour can be used to help attract a specific demographic of the target market. FSSAI (Food Safety and Standard Authority of India) has made use of green colour dot compulsory on all eatables having vegetarian ingredient sold by companies.

Blue colour meaning in business

Stability and depth are best depicted by the colour Blue as far in business usage. Most conservative corporate houses use the colour blue in some form or the other in their logos, business cards, leaflets and brochures etc. Similarly, IT & Communication firms, companies selling computer products, water industry, filtration, swimming pool cleaning businesses etc also always use blue in some way or the other. Studies suggest Health, wellness and travel industry typically use light blue while political and religious organizations tend to use dark blue. In colour psychology, blue's colour meaning ties closely to the sea and the sky. Stability, harmony, peace, calm and trust are just some of the feelings the customers may feel about a brand when firms integrate the colour blue into their branding. Blue can be used in a website's logo or on website's top navigation. Some retailers add their guarantee, trust certification or free shipping icons in a

blue colour to strengthen the trust aspect the colour is known for. Conversely, blue can also carry some negative colour meanings such as depression and can bring about a sense of coldness.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Skype often use blue in their marketing. Retailers like Wal-Mart and Oral B also use the colour. The blue in the Wal-Mart logo can help position the brand as trustworthy, reliable, and relaxing. Oral B is a dental health brand that sells toothbrushes. Healthcare niches, like Oral B, typically use blue in their branding to help people associate the brand with a quality, reliable and safe product. Iconic colour like blue has also caught kid's fancy when used in Oreo biscuits.

Purple colour meaning in business

Purple colour traditionally symbolises generational divide. When business houses wish to combine the passion of red and the stability of blue colour meanings in business, then purple is an ideal choice. Purple is a sign of wealth, wisdom, royalty, creativity and magic. It is highly recommended for women and children's products industry while many men's products are slowly getting attuned to this colour as well. Use medium purple or violet shades to portray academic brilliance and wisdom. Lavender is considered ideal for home-based businesses which sell hand-made products, art work, crafts, lace and other items of symbolic or cultural significance. In colour psychology, purple is a royal colour. The colour meaning for purple is connected to power, nobility, luxury, wisdom, and spirituality. Some perceive its overuse as arrogant. You can add hints of purple to your website's design such as on your free shipping bar, your logo, and as an accent colour in your graphics.

Purple is a colour brands like Hallmark and Yahoo use. When browsing both websites, you'll notice that purple is an accent colour. On Hallmark, the logo and the top navigation are purple but the rest of the website uses a variety of other colours. On Yahoo, the logo, top navigation words, and Yahoo icons like Mail use the colour purple. Many entertainment channels like Sony, Zee have also added purple to their logo to make them look vibrant.

White colour meaning in business

The use of white colour meaning in business is associated with cleanliness and hygiene. It indicates calm, simplicity and organization. On the negative side, some of its meanings include coldness, detachment, sterility, emptiness and disinterest. Most businesses use white as background for their websites. It is ideal for use in infants' products, kitchen and bath appliances and all other enterprises that wish to portray efficiency and discipline. In colour psychology, white showcases innocence, goodness, cleanliness, and humility. Keep in mind, that this is the meaning in North American culture. In some parts of the world, white has the opposite meaning. You'll want to keep this in mind based on the target audience you serve. The colour meaning for white also has a negative side where it symbolizes sterility and cold. A black font on a white background is the best colour combination for readability, that is why, on an ecommerce website, white tends to be the most used colour.

On Adidas' online store, the top navigation is black. The use of a white logo helps create contrast. Since their background is white, they've chosen to use grey as a background for product photos to add another tone to the mix. Many brands who have white as a central colour tend to pair it with black or grey. Example: NBC, Google, Ebay etc.

Black colour meaning in business

Luxury, elegance and sophistication-thy name is black. Black is used for selling and marketing to youth audiences; hence music industry likes to use it to portray style and trendiness. Black is best when combined with jewel colours like ruby, turquoise and gold etc. Black is a popular colour used in retail selling. Like in ShopperStop right from their logo to carry bags only one colour is used i.e. black. In colour psychology, black's colour meaning is symbolic of mystery, power, elegance, and sophistication. In contrast, the black colour meaning can also evoke emotions such as sadness, depression and anger. Many fashion retailers have used black in their logos.

Black is a colour retailers such as Chanel and Nike use. Chanel uses black for their logo and has several black and white images on their website to maintain a consistency in their look. They use a black font on their graphics for images and for their text. Noticeably, their call to actions are also black. Many retailers in the fashion niche, especially, use black call to actions that contrast well against a white background. Nike also uses a black, white and grey colour scheme for their website. Their logo and font is black throughout their website. Thus, making the website easy to read. Example: Cartoon Network, Nike, Puma etc.

Pink colour meaning in business

Pink is the perfect colour for portraying feminism. Charities and NGOs also like to use pink as it evokes compassion and warmth. Teenagers are known to feel attracted to brighter pinks while dusky pink can be utilized for its colour meanings in business to market sentimental products. Pink is a popular colour for brands that primarily serve a female audience. In colour psychology, pink's colour meaning revolves around femininity, playfulness, immaturity and unconditional love. Some brands choose to use the colour pink for the product packaging especially for girl's toys. Whereas others highlight the pink colour in their logo, website design, or to highlight key messages.

Since the colour meaning for pink includes femininity, it's no surprise that brands like Victoria's Secret and Barbie use the colour so heavily. Victoria's Secret even named one of their brands Pink. On their website they use a combination of pink and black to highlight key marketing details. Their logo shines in colour pink. Barbie's website is in a bright pink colour. Their top navigation and drop down menu also subtly use the colour. And of course, their product packaging and logo reinforce the feminine pink colour in their branding.

Silver colour meaning in business

Silver is a beautiful colour that works well for most businesses, though it is used most for promoting appliances. It is sleek, smooth and also futuristic. Hence it is suitable for businesses which deal in computers, technology etc. Silver, like Gold is associated with wealth and luxury.

Gold colour meaning in business

Industries dealing with selling costly high end products use the colour gold which like silver, portrays wealth and luxury. Gold does not work well on websites as it translates to dirty yellow. It is advisable to use gold with red, blue and green to impart sense of prestige and quality.

Gray colour meaning in business

Gray is considered to be a very safe and neutral colour and combined with other colours it can be used in almost any business. It is ideal for legal and financial industries as well as for creating a hi-tech look by combining with blue or yellow etc. Positive meanings of grey colour in business include professionalism, maturity and dignity. In colour psychology, colour grey represents neutrality and balance. Its meaning likely comes from being the shade between white and black. However, grey does carry some negative connotations, particularly when it comes to depression and loss. Its absence of colour makes it dull. Grey can be used for font colour, headers, graphics, and even products to appeal to a mass audience.

Apple is an example of a brand which uses the colour grey in their branding. After all, many of their laptops are in a grey or silver-tone. On their website, they use the colour grey for their header to contrast against a white logo. However, throughout their branding, one can notice a fine balance between white, black and grey which helps to maintain a clean, neutral look.

Brown colour meaning in business

It is generally advisable to avoid the use of too much of brown in logos and websites as it might be viewed as overly passive, shabby and serious. Light brown, on the other hand, has many positive meanings in business including neatness, openness, approachability etc.

So colours have various meanings in business and when used in right proportion can boost sales and also increase productivity and efficiency of the workers. Brown is an earthy colour. After all, it's the colour of earth, wood and stone. So naturally, colour psychology highlights that the meaning for brown colour relates to comfort, security and a down to earth nature. In marketing, one may find that brown colour is often used for natural products and food. Brown is a colour that shows up in logos, banner images, and sometimes even text due to its contrast on a white background. FSSAI (Food Safety and Standard Authority of India) has made use of dark brown colour dot compulsory on all eatables having non-vegetarian ingredient which is easily recognisable.

UPS is an example of a brand who takes advantage of color meanings in their branding. On their website, the brown in their logo is emphasized in the navigation and drop down menus. You might also notice that complementary colours include yellow and green which all have natural elements to them. For example, yellow might represent the sun and green might represent nature. Altogether, it helps position UPS brand as a secure, reliable and down to earth company which is exactly what you'd want from a delivery service.

Colours in Therapy and Astrology

As colours speak the language of heart and soul, they are being used as therapy to treat patients, Different colors have different curative properties and healers have found that using and avoiding certain colors is a way of expressing what and how you feel. Color therapy, also known as CHROMOTHERAPY has been in used since ancient times and is being used as alternative tool to help people balance their emotions and feelings. Colored lights, different colored food and also different colored clothes are being used to infuse energy and enlighten the spark of positivity specially in terminally ill patients.

Astrologists have also tried to interpret people's personalities by allocating different colors to different zodiac signs. If red says "I am ignited" for Aries, The yellowish orange says "I am satisfied" for Gemini. Indigo also pops up to say for a Piscean "I am deep". So colours do reflect personality traits.

Conclusion:

It is interesting to learn that colours are a **vocabulary** used by creative people to speak in thousand different ways. Knowingly or unknowingly, they articulate a lot and affect our communication. Colours like emotions possess physical vibrations and create a lot of meaningful noise at our conscious and subconscious levels.

We have to listen to them with our heart and soul.

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