



Color Psychology

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Abstract: Color plays an important part in bringing out the image of interior spaces by integrating the colors used in the overall interior design, in accessories, and in furniture to create the character as a whole (Birren, 2013). According to color theory, different colors have different meanings depending on the culture and context of use. Additionally, the perception of colors may be influenced by additional factors such as the space and age of the individual. Numerous studies have shown how color affects the user's perception of both space, mass, and other environmental factors. Visual perception does not only occur in the eyes or as a result of accepting visual stimuli, it can also be a reaction to attention. In this paper, the researcher will facilitate the impact of color on many aspects from different culture views.

Keywords: The perception of colors, Cultural reference, Verbal and nonverbal influence.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, there is a lot of theoretical research in different knowledge disciplines that attempts to assess the topic of color, its systems, properties, and relationships. For designers, color has a lot more than just the layer of paint or as a decoration tool. It is one of the base elements of design while also the most expressive in terms of the meaning it conveys and the psychological effects perceived by the audience. Color plays an important part in bringing out the image of interior spaces by integrating the colors used in the overall interior design, in accessories, and in furniture to create the character as a whole (Birren, 2013). In recent times, the concept of brand space and its relationship with the general image of interior space has been a matter of attention. The interest has focused on how brand space may add to the aesthetic properties of a building and its interior spaces and how they may affect both the performance of users, the commercial brand trust, and consumer attraction. When combined the brand space identity and color properties present an effective way of creating an attractive image of the desired commercial space.

When designing buildings and structures, there are multiple factors to consider besides the function of the building or structure. Those in the building should be able to enjoy the atmosphere provided in order for the building to achieve its purpose. Since few architectural structures are powerful enough to generate a similar perception worldwide, most designers rely on the use of color to appease their target group. The impact of lighting conditions and color on the performance and emotions of people is gaining increased attention in modern society (Crowley, 1983). While many people allocated large resources in designing spaces with the right color choices and lighting conditions, there is minimal scientific evidence to prove their effectiveness.

COLOR CATEGORIES

According to color theory, different colors have different meanings depending on the culture and context of use. Additionally, the perception of colors may be influenced by additional factors such as the space and age of the individual. People can view about 7 million colors but these are built from similar basic building blocks.

- The primary colors, Red, Blue, and Yellow form a basis for all the other shades and cannot be created by combining other colors. When these colors are mixed together in equal proportions, the resulting color is black
- Secondary colors are used to describe the colors created by mixing two primary colors. This group is composed of colors such as violet (red + blue), lime (green + yellow), lavender (violet + blue), purple (violet + red), amber (orange + yellow), and turquoise (green + blue).
- Tertiary colors come from mixing one primary color with a secondary color. There are six tertiary colors; lime, lavender, saffron, purple, amber, and turquoise.

When combining black or white with one of the above mentioned colors, one gets shades and tints, while tones describe the depth of a color. Neutrals are formed by creating subtle shades from a range of pale colors such as cream and beige which are used to balance rich or vibrant colors. These colors can also be classified into warm and cold colors. Warm colors have more yellow and red in their make-up and are generally considered happy and energizing while cold colors have a large percentage of blue such as violet blue, and some green and are generally considered to have a calming effect (Eckstut & Eckstut, 2013).

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE OUR PERCEPTION OF COLOR

Color Context

A single color can have multiple meanings in different cultures. For example, in Asia, Orange is a spiritually enlightened, positive, life-affirming color while in the United States, it is a color associated with traffic delays, road hazards, and fast food restaurants. When considering multiple cultures, colors can differentiate between a premium brand and a discount brand, fun and serious, female and male, young and old, or symbolize a rite of passage. Context forms the basis for the meanings associated with color. For example, black may be associated with mourners, priests, ninjas, or a crowd at an art gallery.

Linguistics relativity and colors

Benjamin Whorf's Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis argues that a person's language limits and determines what the person experiences. Not all color based concepts can be expressed in all languages. This language barrier ends up affecting the individual's perception of color. For example, the Boas language in Liberia and the Shona language have no words to differentiate red from orange.

Climate

According to Psychologist E.R. Jaensch, the climate in which a person lives influences their color perception and preferences. Jaensch's studies indicate that those living in warmer tropical regions with bright sunlight prefer bright and warm colors while those from colder regions preferred less saturated and cooler colors (Sharpe, 1975). Additionally, the environment also dictates how people classify colors according to their relevance to everyday life. For example, Eskimos have 17 words to describe white as it applies to different snow conditions.

MEANINGS OF COLORS IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

In the past some scholars have explored to study the different meanings and symbolisms associated with colors in different cultures around the world. They conducted a survey in countries that asked people the meanings they associated with different colors in different contexts. The results show a cross-cultural pattern of both dissimilarity and similarity in the color meaning associations and color preferences. The study showed that the colors green, white, and blue are well liked across countries and have relatively similar meanings (Gage, 1999). Additionally, red and black also received high ratings although their cross-cultural meanings were sometimes

radically different. East Asian cultures proved to have more distinction in the meanings associated with color while whereas groups in the US and Latin Americas make only average amounts of color distinctions. The results also showed that around the world, there are different meanings associated with colors. However, many intrinsic properties of colors such as liking and meaning appear to be pan cultural.

In North America, that is, the USA and Canada, red is associated with meanings such as safety, rescue, excitement, adultery, spicy, and hot. This is evident in the color combination of the Canadian flag and the Royal Canadian Mountain Police uniform. Yellow is associated with a happy mood or sunny day while it can also serve to give precautions and represent cowardice. An example of its cautionary use is the yellow tape used by police in the US to signify a police area while the yellow in taxis represents a happy mood while the military uses a yellow symbol for someone who has just returned home from a tour of duty (Gage, 1999). Blue represents official business, a trustworthy person, a philosophy, and is generally associated with a soothing mood. Good examples of this are the US mailboxes, uniforms and blue ribbons. Green is associated with the environment, masculinity, a desire to go outside, envy, healthy, and freshness although in work, the term 'green' means inexperienced. An example is in the highway signs in this region and the money color. Orange means refreshing or danger and is usually used to increase visibility. Contexts usually associated with this color include sunsets while the color of prison uniforms and highway signs signifies danger. Purple in the US and Canada is associated with bravery, loyalty, law, and nobility and is a prominent color in military bravery medals and college colors. Pink is associated with childhood, femininity, homosexuality, sweetness, and fun and is usually found on the clothing of baby girls, candy, and gay movements. Brown is considered a dull and boring color while it is also associated with fertility, poverty, and unprocessed products. A good example of this is in the National Park signs and the coffee packaging (Riley, 1995). Gold is a color associated with wealth, money and luminosity and is prominent in liquor, architecture, jewelry, and chocolate. Black is associated with sin, evil, death, nothingness, formal, and sexy and is a popular color in clothing. White is means clean, elegant, or pure and can also signify a sanitized environment. Sleek means classy, sleek, or modern and is usually found in men products and car parts. Gray is associated with strength, wisdom, humility, depression, and grief.

In Latin America, Red means sunny, intensity, death, religion, vibrancy, and religion. It is also the Aztec color for north and is used in the national flag. Yellow is often found in folk art representing the sun and warmth. Blue is used in mourning and can also mean trust and tranquility. Similar to north America, green is associated with vegetation while wealth is associated with wealth, and is found in church adornments and jewelry. Black is mourning color and is associated with religion, death, and respect. Furthermore, it is usually found in cleric robes. White is a color of purity and cleanliness and is found among the peasants and peasant clothing. Silver is also a symbol of wealth found mainly in jewelry.

In the Caribbean countries such as the Bahamas, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Cuba, red means African roots, nature and animals and is a prominent color among the flowers and birds of the region. Green is associated with lush vegetation while in Puerto Rico it is associated with animals such as the coqui frog. Yellow also shows African roots, animals, and culture and is found in the Jamaican flag, animals, and flowers. Blue is associated with water, and animals as it is a common coloring in the birds of the region. Pink is a color used heavily in architecture in these countries and is meant to convey a soothing mood to the occupants (Sharpe, 1975). White is associated with cleanliness, a cool environment, and authority as it is usually found in jewelry and police uniforms. Orange is a color associated with the Trupial bird and other animals of a similar coloring. Brown means alcohol and is common in Caribbean rum while silver and gold are associated with riches and pirates. Similar to Latin American countries, blue is also associated with death and pirates.

In Argentina, silver is associated with craftsmanship, mastery, and gauchos. Red is also a color of craftsmanship as it is common in pottery and baskets. Blue is the color of the sky, the ocean, and is thus associated with

freedom, blessings, and infinity. It also signifies travel, ambition, goals, vastness, and is found on the Argentine flag. Yellow is a color of ceremony, religion, visibility, and wealth. It is common in religious relics and jewelry. White is a color of purity, aspiration, accomplishment, and symbolizes light in paintings.

In Brazil, red is a color of vibrancy, and visibility. Additionally, red cars have been banned in Brazil due to the common perception of them causing more accidents. Purple is associated with mourning and green is the color for the environment and a national symbol of the rainforest. Orange is the color of birds such as the Macaws and also symbolizes the environment. Brown is the color of nature as it is the color of wood and numerous nut species. Black is a color of sophistication, religion, authority, and formality and is common in religious, formal, and widow's clothing.

In Western European countries, black is associated with elegance, formality, mourning, death, and evil. It is common in formal and widow's clothing. White is a color of purity, cleanliness, good, neutral, bleak, and empty. It is a common color in food packaging and nurse's uniforms. In conflict situations, white is used to signify surrender and peace while gray is common in architecture and signifies experiences ambiguity, and wisdom. People associated grey with concrete, smoke, and fog. Similar to other western countries, silver also symbolizes technology, craftsmanship, and expensive items. It is a common color in shaving tools and weapons. Red is the color of love romance, optimism, vigor, strength, and caution. It is a preferred color for traffic signs, cars, and clothing. Yellow is used to increase visibility, indicate quality, and hazards. It is used in reference guides, telephone booths, and mailboxes. Blue represents the sky, truth, emotion, serenity, reliability, responsibility, and fidelity and is a common color in uniforms and art. Green is associated with nature, confidence, inexperience, jealousy, and fertility. It is common surgical uniforms and environmental symbols. Orange is used to indicate cheapness, visibility, and is associated with loudness, life rafts, and warning signs. Similar to other countries, brown is the color of the earth and symbolizes masculinity as it is common in animal fur. Purple symbolizes nobility, vanity, power, and luxury since it is the royal color. Pinks is associated with flirtation, feminist, soothing environment, and delicate. It is used in makeup, baby clothing, and girls' clothing. Gold is the color wealth, excess, mysticism, and luxury. It is common in jewelry, and coins.

In Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines, tan is the color of earth and means bamboo or the desert. White is the color of the ocean and coral usually the Great Barrier Reef. Yellow is the color of resurrection and rebirth and symbolizes the Easter period. Red is the color of the sun and symbolizes the soil, or sunset. Blue is the color of water and symbolizes oceans or flags. Green is the color of craftsmanship and nature while brown is the color of the earth and soil.

In India, red is the color of fertility and birth. It is a common coloring in wedding dresses, and hair. Yellow is the color of the sun, warmth, and commerce. Blue is the color of the heavens, and symbolizes truth, mercy, and love. Green is the color of nature and symbolizes crops and vegetation. Pink is associated with hope and happiness as it is the preferred color for the Ganesh birthday celebration. Orange means rebellion and death and is the color for the death shrouds of married women and the robes of Hindu monks. Black symbolizes intolerance, laziness, and anger. It is also symbolizing alcohol and the untouchable class. Similar to other countries and cultures, white is the color of light, rebirth, creation, serenity and reincarnation. It also symbolizes the highest social class, the Brahman.

Red in Japan means self-sacrifice, strength, and passion. It also symbolizes blood. Yellow means sunshine, nature, and warmth. Orange is the color of happiness and love while Purple is the color of royalty. Pink represents femininity, good health, youth, and can be used for off color humor. Similar to other countries, gold symbolizes wealth, and prestige while brown represents strength, and durability. Silver is the color associated with the latest technology, precision, masculinity, and strength as it is a common color in tools and weapons. Black means anger, non-being, and mystery while death is the color of death and mourning.

In France, red is the color of passionate love, blood, virtue, and lust while yellow is associated with joy and the summer. Blue represents trust, reliability, and water, and is extensively used in jewelry and street signs. Green symbolizes the outdoors and is commonly found in rooftops and park benches. Gold is still the color of luxury and light as it is the color of champagne and high end decorations. Pottery and figurines utilize orange which symbolizes earth.

In Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, yellow is used to increase visibility with applications such as rain jackets and road signs. Red is the color of authority, power, temper, government, and visibility and is used for mailboxes and telephone booths. Blue is associated with tranquility, decorum, and dignity. In Scotland, blue is both a formal and a war color. Green represents the environment, quality, and Catholicism while brown is the color for manual labor, honesty, and the earth. Gold and purple are the colors of the royal crown and thus symbolize royalty while black signifies death, mourning, or dignity. White embodies peace and leisure while the use of gray implies elegance, strength, sophistication, taste, and traditions. Orange is the Irish flag and may also refer to the Protestant religion.

In Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan, red means celebration, summer, joy, good luck, communism, fire, good fortune, government and fertility. Yellow symbolizes the sun, royalty, power, happiness, and masculinity while blue is the color of water and the sky. Green represents spring, youth, and desirability especially with the prominence of jade jewelry. Orange symbolizes humility, happiness, good health, immortality, and love. Similar to other cultures, gold is the color of wealth, prestige, status, preciousness and is often found in decoration and jewelry. Black exemplifies the unknown, water, and life while white is associated with death and mourning.

The Balkans and Slavic states view red as the color of medicine and blue as representing art. Gold is associated with fairytales, green symbolizes nature, while white shows neatness and intelligence. Other countries such as Singapore and Malaysia have lesser meanings for colors where red represents healing, yellow is the color of authority, green shows affiliation with Islam, orange symbolizes official capacity, black symbolizes mourning while white shows respect. Gold in Thailand is prominent in architecture while red is associated with Buddhism and Yellow represents Nirvana hence its use in the color of the Sash around Buddha statues.

DISCUSSION

Understanding the perception of colors across different cultures is important for businesses and professionals considering their coloring options. Through cultural exchange, the symbolism of color across cultures which results in common identification of color names. According to Jung et al., (2013) symbols are the 'terms, and names that may be familiar in daily life yet have some unique cultural connotations in addition to the obvious meanings.' Over the centuries, the meanings and uses of color have never been consistent across geographical and cultural boundaries. Similar colors can carry vastly different meanings across cultures. For example, in China, yellow is the imperial color while in Europe, it symbolizes deceit and cowardice. The same color stands for humility in Buddhist tradition and symbolizes the west in Mayan tradition. The reason for these divergences is that the construction of symbols used to portray archetypal energies is limited by the constructs of the human mind. On the cultural level, the creation process requires stimuli from the natural environment and the cultural elite are usually the dominant force in defining color meanings.

CONCLUSION

Numerous studies have shown how color affects the user's perception of both space, mass, and other environmental factors. Visual perception does not only occur in the eyes or as a result of accepting visual stimuli, it can also be a reaction to attention. Users of a building or space will instantly examine their surroundings to search for details that would help them organize their external environment. Visual perception is the ultimate outcome of a long process of mental interpretation of cues received. In this sense, color affects the user's perception of the architectural space.

Companies and organizations with global operations should pay special attentions to cultural color meanings as consumer popularity may depend on the branding space that an organization applies. It would also affect their marketing strategies as some colors have vastly different implied meanings in neighboring cultures and countries. In conclusion, color and light are a form of energy and they affect people's feelings by encouraging them to construct satisfying human relationships which are in turn determined by the individual's culture and society. Warm colors provide a warm atmosphere that promotes friendship. The hues on the warm side of the color map are generally considered as pleasant, cozy, and comfortable. Cool colors give feeling of calmness among them blue, green, and violet. However, while they are considered relaxing, the psychological outlook is that prolonged exposure may cause depression and negative psychological impacts. Neutral colors such as black, gray, and white have less intense psychological effects as compared to the other two and include colors such as beige, brown, and tans.

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Citation: Aryaf Alnasuan, *Color Psychology*, American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Volume 2, 2016; pp:1-6

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