

COLOUR ME COLOURED

by Natalie Clayton

Have you ever stopped to consider the effect that colour has on everything we do?

Colour surrounds us and manifests itself in our choices – clothing, cars, decorations, logos and websites. Like it or not, colour also plays a large role shaping the identities of people, countries (think flags) and sporting teams.

Colour can affect our moods and the millions spent by companies every year on careful branding and design is testament to popular belief that colour can influence our decisions and inspire our actions – to purchase, encouraging loyalty, conveying seriousness, authority, or whatever.

Colour should never be underestimated as a powerful vehicle of communication and symbolism – and it goes a lot deeper than traffic lights directing us on the roads.

Not surprisingly, at the Red Agency we are convinced in the power of colour and from our research into colour facts, as well as into popular opinion, we have developed an interesting snapshot of colour.

So, the next time you're designing a campaign, selecting a colour for a piece of collateral, developing a brand, creating a logo, dressing for a client meeting or having your office walls painted, you might want to consider:

RED

- Has been known to escalate the body's metabolism
- Often associated with vibrancy, passion, energy, vitality and power
- Widely considered to be the most exciting colour
- In design, red is the attention grabber. It is considered the hottest colour with the highest impact for attention and action. It has a strong masculine appeal.

YELLOW

- Associated with cheerfulness
- In design, lighter shades of yellow can promote feelings of relaxation, but dark yellows can overpower an image.
- In natural therapies, yellow is the colour of intellect and it is used for mental stimulation.
- A few years ago, research from Pantone revealed that a yellow background with black type is the best colour combination for

printed material. Tests show that this combination scored the high in terms of memory retention and in legibility.

- Yellow is the colour that the human eye notices first.

BLUE

- Widely considered to be the most calming colour
- In design, light blue is often used to soothe while dark blue conveys dignity (explains all those blue corporate logos).
- In natural therapies, blue is used to emit serenity and is used for cooling, calming, reconstructing and protecting.
- Bees are attracted to the colour blue.

GREEN

- In design, brighter shades of green are applied to stimulate and uplift while dark green is used to evoke calm and quiet.
- In natural therapies, green is used to create harmony and balance.
- Extremely popular in branding campaigns to symbolise a healthy lifestyle. Green is often used with health food products, recycling, vegetables and even menthol cigarettes.

BROWN

- Brown is the new black. Brown is the latest beauty and fashion-considered to be 'in' this winter
- Often used in branding to symbolise home and earth

BLACK AND WHITE

- White is widely associated with innocence (think western bridal gowns) and sterility (hospitals)
- White diamonds are the best diamonds.
- White would be an inappropriate colour for a wedding in China. It is the colour of mourning.
- A black car will heat up faster in the sun than a white car will. It will also lose its heat faster in the winter.
- A white flag is internationally recognised as a sign of surrender.

- In branding and design, black is the embodiment of sophistication, gives an expensive message. It also lends itself wonderfully as a background colour to accentuate other colours, such as: yellow, red and orange.

These are just the tip of the iceberg and don't even address eye and hair colour stereotypes or the interpretation of different colours in dreams.

An understanding of the meanings and perceptions that surround specific hues can help set the mood for many communication activities.

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