

## Color Perception Analysis on Consumers

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### Abstract

In the present paper we have realized a psychological study that aims to determine how color affects our day-to-day decisions. The key aspects of the study are drawn by strategically using colors which make the customers feel in a certain way about a brand which tends to be constantly in trend. The study focuses on how colors define the image of a brand, representing a sales strategy and it includes 3 main categories: classic colors, trend colors and gradient colors. Based on a questionnaire, consumers' preferences regarding the influence of colors in choosing a product were analyzed. Colors are the meaning of a visual perception which create, together or separately, a harmony in our lives through accents, nuances or shades. A long time ago, the historical periods were identified through style, architecture, shapes and colors. These are taken as a base for the present period, inspiring the market in order to recreate the past times in a modern way, also known as a "trend". Personal involvement and outlined opinions contribute in creating a personal approach in color analysis on consumers by strengthening already existing concepts. Through new insights in this segment of colors, many industries could build themselves a modern strategy in line with consumers' perception.

**Keywords:** Marketing, trends, consumer behavior, colors.

**JEL classification:** M31, D15, E32, D47.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. History of trend colors

This paper aims to conceptually analyze and define based on the analysis, the relationship between the consumers and their behavior, in terms of color impact. In a specialized marketing language, we can call this aspect "Color Perception Analysis on Consumers", which materialized in the results of this article by conducting a study.

The English art historian John Ruskin said in "The Stones of Venice" that: "*The purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love color the most.*" (Ruskin, 1851) Starting from this quote, we can clearly distinguish the historical perception of colors and its transposition in the present, by confirming the importance of colors around us.

Luxurious brands are usually the first that give a trend in many industry segments, in line with a period of time, cyclicity and forecasts. Once they have appeared in showrooms, stores and promotions by being used as elementary main colors in various aspects of an industry, these colors became a trend. One of the explanations could be that luxurious brands plan the trend colors by thinking ahead for a strong artistic strategy with three, four or maybe five years before something becomes a trend. Sometimes, that aspect could decide the difference between a normal market and a niche market. The former is usually easily understood by most of the customers, while the latter is seen as a trigger for the new trend colors.

At present, it has become a fine art to analyze the color perception on consumers in an ever-changing market and to notice the preferences in every industry. If colors are important in consumers' life, we can become aware of the fact that most people should buy depending of

the trend colors or they could stay classy, irrespective of the segment. Also, if the strategy based on colors is strong enough, that can induce the choice for the consumers by making them buy based on “their intuition”. Therefore, how have trend colors become the colors that define the consumers?

## 1.2. Institutes, Industries and multicultural aspects

In 2021, after a year of a historical crisis, challenges and repercussions of global pandemic changed the way of life and working, giving birth to a theme of interest for many artists from the creative sector. We have redefined our priorities and have started by cherishing what we have now more importantly than what we dream to have. Starting from this principle, artists have improved trends in interior design so that people have more access to comfort, beauty and modernity. It can be statistically proven that this period has been more about home and less about office, because people are involved in buying more furniture, developing a true instinct for redecorating their homes and making it more than a house. This aspect brought in the global market a supply for interior designers and advice on it in this niche.

Institutes have also observed the needs of the market and have launched this spring a totally different color palette. Pantone, one of the most popular global Color Institute had set the colors of the year: illuminating yellow and ultimate grey. (Pantone, n.d.)

Even if the multicultural aspects should break the trend, the creators have found an explanation that could help each country to understand the essence of the color in defining customers choice. Leatrice Eiseman, the executive director of the Pantone Color Institute, argued that: “The union of an enduring Ultimate Gray with the vibrant Yellow Illuminating expresses a message of positivity supported by fortitude. Practical and rock solid but at the same time warming and optimistic, this is a color combination that gives us resilience and hope. We need to feel encouraged and uplifted; this is essential to the human spirit.”

By analyzing the historical period of colors named by Pantone, we can notice an increasing tendency to use color to create a marketing strategy for selling. It’s important to establish that those colors, known as “trend colors” are present not just in interior design, but in Fashion, Beauty, Technology and Food Industry by implementing a color in consumer behavior by using the trend strategy.

Color is a critical and decisive marketing variable in setting an image of a brand in a market with no standardization. Because the color of a product doesn’t mean functionality, it is important to establish a balance between design, quality, utility and price.



Image 1, Pantone Colors, 2000-2021

### 1.3. The main categories of colors

The study focused on how colors define the image of a brand, representing a sales strategy, and it includes 3 main categories: classic colors, gradient colors and trend colors.

- *classic colors – are those colors which remain unchanged in time and most of the time they are colors used in a 70% proportion in designing a concept (physical or digital);*
- *gradient colors – usually, they are trend colors which are made gradient, generally used in the digital segment (websites, advertising, software);*
- *trend colors – are the colors which are changing once a year or seasonally, depending on the trend given by the big color institutions, such as Pantone Color Institute.*

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Design of the survey

The present article was designed both by the approach and the methodological methods. The main questions which have constituted the questionnaire were created to help companies understand the behavior of the consumers in an analytical way.

We can distinguish:

- *What does marketing mean in terms of color perception and how can a brand set a strategy?*
- *What is a trend and how is this established in an ever-changing market?*
- *How can consumer behavior be the key for a brand to develop a strategy?*
- *Why are colors so important in marketing and how should we understand them?*

### 2.2. Participants

Overall, 126 people who have responded to the questionnaire have different occupations (35% of them are student, 46% employees, 7% unemployed and 12% entrepreneurs) and most of them study or work in the economic field.

The age of subjects ranged from 18 to 65 years, with a mean of 41.5. The insights show us that for this study 87 women and 37 men had responded, while 2 persons had preferred to not provide their gender.

### 2.3. Approach

By distinguishing 3 main categories of colors, the survey was created in a practical way which aims to clarify if people perceive colors as a strategic marketing factor or they tend to choose them.

The main goal of this research is to examine the influence of various colors panels on consumers' perceptions. We investigated 3 different categories of colors including classics, gradients and trends as well as the most relevant shades, nuances and tones. We created 3 distinguishing panels including typical colors selected in such a way to create a impactful background with the help of the most used colors in every day life.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Descriptive statistics

In a psychological way, colors can influence people through thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Lauren I. Labrecque, et al., 2013). Based on this fact, one of the most relevant questions of the survey reflected the importance of a color for people in global thinking, irrespective of the situation, i.e., whether they are customers or not: 'Is color important?' – 121 of the respondents consider that color is important while 5 of them said 'no'.

By analyzing the responses for this question in relation to the occupation of the respondents, the people who consider that color is unimportant are students, employees, unemployed and entrepreneurs. Therefore, there is no rule for preferring colors depending on the field of work or study, it is more about perception by use, shade, and color, in a different order for each of them.

In his marketing research, Jill Morton explored the relationship between marketing and colors, and he concluded that people attribute the most importance to visual factors when they are purchasing products (Jill Morton, 1995). In this sense, visual perception is a strong factor in brand recognition, and it involves the way in which people buy depending on the primary characteristics of a product (colors or shapes that spontaneously affect the passively receiving mind) (Rudolf Arnheim, 1974).

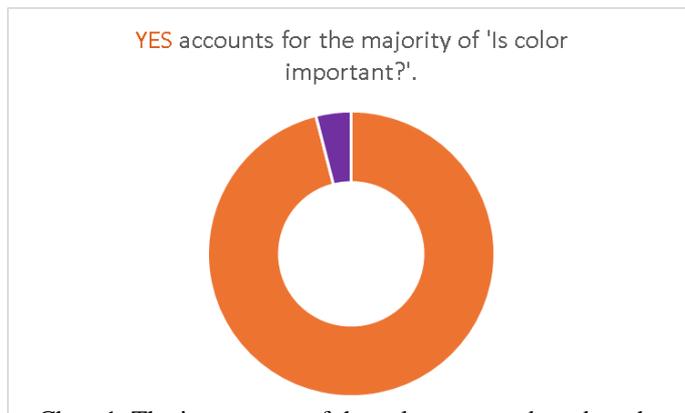


Chart 1, The importance of the color, source: based on the answers in the questionnaire

Table 5, The importance of the color, source: based on the answer in the questionnaire

Row Labels	Count of ID
YES	121
NO	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>126</b>

The tendency for people to choose the same colors is actually a marketing strategy that has a major psychological impact by forming the perception of colors. Most of the time, the fact that people choose instinctively does not mean that they do not perceive the characteristics of what they have chosen, but rather, they are increasingly influenced by what they see most often and appear in the form of modern, new, lush. At the question, ‘How often is your condition influenced by the surrounding colors?’, ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’ are the most preferred responses.

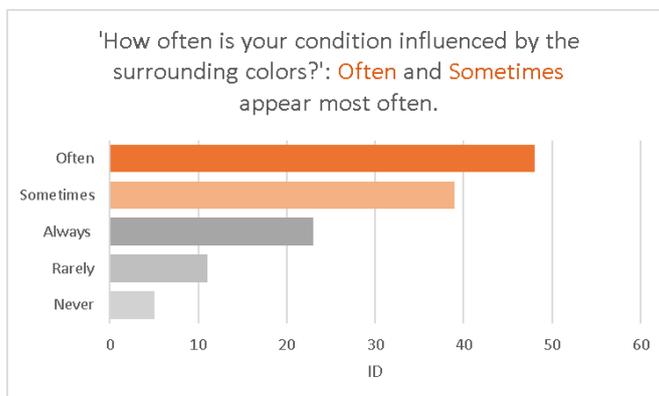


Chart 2, The influence of the colors, source: based on the answers in the questionnaire

Table 6, The influence of the colors, source: based on the answers in the questionnaire

Row Labels	Count of ID
Often	48
Sometimes	39
Always	23
Rarely	11
Never	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>126</b>

Because color is an influential element of design (Jansson, C., et al., 2004), we can see it like a human response to color perception. Being in a multicolor environment every day, people

are used to choosing colors they see the most. One of the explanations could be the habitude with which we observe trend colors, gradient or classic in so many things that does not attach too much importance.

At the question, ‘In which of the following field do you consider color important?’, many people decided that color is important for them in all the fields. This can have a huge impact in a marketing approach to create a strategy based on colors.

With a view to understand the consumer's behavior through the decisions he makes, in the present study, we devised the question: ‘Which of the following types of colors is your choice?’. The vast majority responded that they prefer classic colors, followed by trendy and gradient colors. Also, when we talk about colors, we must keep in mind that some people may prefer purple, but at the same time they may not prefer a faded purple or a gradient purple. Therefore, it is important as a company to analyze what type of colors customers prefer and how they could integrate these colors in the products offered.

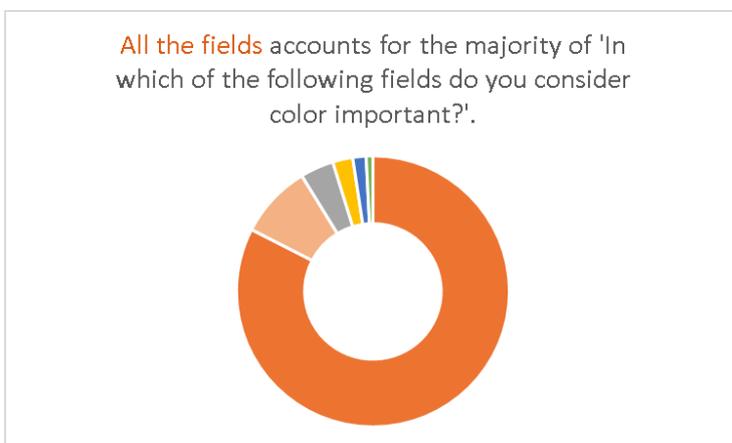


Table 7, Colors in certain fields, source: based on the answers in the questionnaire

Row Labels	Count of ID
All the fields	104
Interior Design	11
No answer	5
Fashion	3
Marketing/Advertising	2
Graphic Design	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>126</b>

Chart 3, Colors in certain fields, source: based on the answers in the questionnaire

To easily identify the characteristics of a color, we could suppose a person prefers purple. If he has a choice, that person will be able to choose a classic purple, but also, he may not prefer a fade purple or a gradient purple.

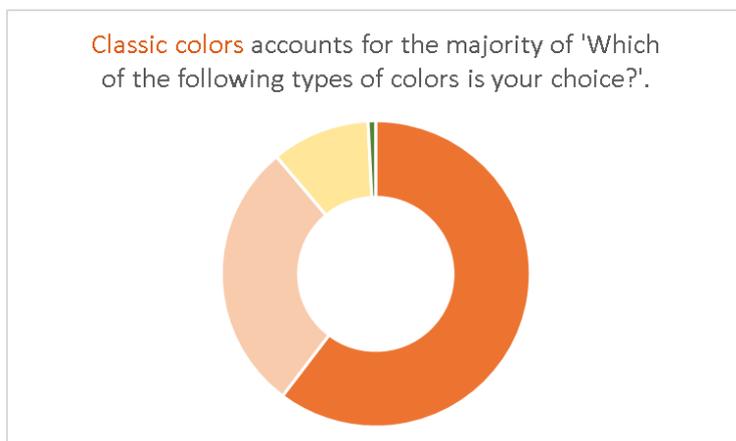


Table 8, The main categories of colors, source: based on the answers in the questionnaire

Row Labels	Count of ID
Classic colors	76
Trend colors	36
Gradient colors	13
No answer	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>126</b>

Chart 4, The main categories of colors, source: based on the answers in the questionnaire

Human senses play an important role in brand awareness through ‘sensory marketing’ which means pleasing the customer’s senses and strategically influencing their perception and behavior (Hinestroza, et al., 2014).

The significance of colors depending on the category to which they belong can also be seen as a response to the factors around us. Although most people are amazed by concepts that include new, bold colors, they prefer to stay in the comfort zone by choosing a color that they already associate with certain areas, products, or preferences.

In a broad sense, these color categories are somehow already grouped, so that some people who are working in fields that do not involve coloristic may not be able to express their preferences on a certain color category.

Most of the time, what makes consumers choose a variant of a color can be expressed by the way they visually perceive that color and the symbolism that they associate with it. Culturally speaking, it has become a true art to define what a color means in a broad sense, but from a psychological point of view, any statement can make sense, because consumers can have different color preferences as long as the colors contain specific meanings and communicate beyond aesthetics (Caivano, José Luis & López, Mabel Amand, 2007).

### **3.2. Nuances, shades and tones**

By creating a color background through shades, nuances and tones, a palette will be complete, and it will be named a 'monochromatic scheme color'. One of the easiest ways to realize harmony in aspect is defined by using monochromatic colors. A monochrome color is usually perceived as using the same color in design (interiors, products marketing aspect), while the monochromatic means 'the same color' – it refers to the same color that will be refined in some ways to create a colorful but simple visual perception.

We identify classic, gradient or trend colors by the value of the color, meaning how much white, black, or grey has been added to create a nuance. Talking about contrasts usually refers to classic colors, while shades or fades refer to gradient or trend colors.

To understand the differences between the main characteristics of the colors, we should know:

1. Color (as nuance): is the quality of an object in relation to the light reflected by an object. Colors are those to which we are referring when we talk about 'blue', 'red', or 'orange'. Also, the value of a color is simply its brightness or darkness, and this constitutes a new aspect of a color. If we are talking about a tint, this refers to the fact that a nuance was created after white has been added.
2. Shades: refer to a nuance after black has been added. In this case the value of the color has darkened by adding black.
3. Tone: is a color after grey has been added and in this way the value of the color has been inactivated with grey.

We can notice that most of the people prefer classic colors with new shades, tones, or nuances. For example, in this survey, at the question 'Which of the following classic colors is your favorite?', the answers were: 'bayberry' and 'buttercream'. While the former is a dark one, the latter is a nuance of beige, both being reinterpreted in a modern way to use.

In the last year, we've met bayberry as a derived nuance from royal or emerald green and olive, mixed to bring a new fresh air in many industries.



Image 2, Pantone Classic Colors

Also, because Art Nouveau and Art Deco are cyclical periods which are again present, we can see them in many environmental aspects defined by warm and light nuances of colors. The studies show that various shades of white are often associated with emotional characteristics based on four factors: flamboyant, elegant, clear, and soft (Nooree Na & Hyeon Jeong Suk, 2014). This offers a strong argument in support of why ‘buttercream’ was created and has become a classic choice in a modern era.

#### 4. Conclusions

Colors make the world spin – whether you think about the concept of mixing or the cyclicity of trends over the ages of humanity. Our daily existence revolves around colors whether we are aware of it or not. To conclude, in as much as the value of the article is concerned, personal involvement and outlined opinions contribute in creating a personal approach in color analysis on consumers by strengthening already existing concepts.

Similarly, through new insights in this segment of colors, many industries could build for themselves a modern strategy in line with consumers' perception.

In a continuously changing and evolving market, one can notice the importance of the psychology of colors in relation to consumer conviction among companies to set a future marketing strategy because colors are certainly the most important nonverbal characteristics for products (Shaip BYTYÇI, 2020).

Carefully using colors can contribute to a marketing strategy based on competitive advantage in differentiating a brand's products from its competition and in the same time to create feelings and influence moods in a positive or negative way for consumers ( Satyendra Singh , 2006). Based on this fact, we notice that colors play an important and decisive role in forming an attitude and a perception for the consumer, an aspect that should be understood by every company in order to create a brand of the future, adapted to a market always influenced by the ‘new’.

Color perception in psychological terms means a form of associative learning, a permanent change in consumer's behavior enhanced by experiences through marketing strategies implemented by the companies. The classical condition is evident through the process of associating experiences and senses towards a product, expressed in a form in which they will be a preference for the consumer. In other words, people are not born with preferences for certain colors but they perceive them depending on the associations encountered and visual experiences. This can also be interpreted depending on the association made on the basis of colors already assigned to certain categories of products (Grossman, R. P. & Wisenblit, J.Z., 1999).

The present paper contains a study that has assessed the color perception on consumers through association with a marketing strategy, which allows for a visual perspective and forecasts that will improve the companies practice in a ever-changing market.

The results of the study show that most of the respondents prefer classic colors even if they have a tendency to choose these trend colors which they see most of the time in their everyday environment. The association between the perception of colors and their meaning could be interpreted in the form of a contextual analysis of colors as a major factor in the formation of unique and innovative experiences for consumers.

An interesting way in which a brand can become aware of the perception of colors among consumers is to pay attention to the trend set in each season and each year, to follow their cyclical evolution and significantly associated colors, and in this way to later find a way to look analytically at the influence of a color in choosing a product.

Through its many meanings, color remains the most valuable element of design, offering a different visual experience for each consumer, uniquely associated with segments delimited by its simple appearance. Therefore, despite trying to build their sales strategy according to the color preferences of consumers, it is advisable for companies to understand that each color is perceived differently and that it can be easily understood due to the trend.

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