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RESEARCH ARTICLE

COLORS: THE EMOTIONS AND IMPRESSIONS THEY EVOKE

Jiya Gupta

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Abstract

In the words of Oscar Wilde, "Mere color can speak to the soul in a thousand different ways." I too believe that colors are an inseparable aspect of every individual's life and play an essential role in our perception of the world. People often underestimate the power of colors and consider them to be just a breathtaking result of the refraction of light, but few understand the way in which this wide spectrum influences almost every moment of our life. The suitable use of colors is extremely important, as each color conveys a different mood, message, and impression. Each color symbolizes an emotion which in turn influences our decisions and behavior. The goal of this article is to highlight the relationship between colors and emotions and explain how this knowledge is used beyond the canvas, in movies, logos, cultures and therapy. For this article I compiled the views of many color psychologists, studied charts to understand people's color preferences and tracked down the relevance of colors across cultures and professional fields. I watched videos where people have objectively documented their emotions on seeing a color and then narrated their story. At the end, this process has confirmed an inseparable connection between colors, emotions and impressions.

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Introduction:-

One of the most powerful and irreplaceable forms of communication is color. It plays a vital role in the world we live in. Color can sway thinking, actions and cause reactions. Each color indirectly conveys a different message, sets a different mood and elicits a varied emotion. In this research article, I plan to dig deeper and understand the relation between color, emotion and cognitive perception. I intend to regard color as a stimulus and record the impression and response it produces. Previous research has proved that colors can affect behavior and emotions only at a subconscious level, but I believe that colors also consciously affect our movements and judgments of people around us. This research is important as I want to establish that this intimate relation between colors, emotions and impressions works on varied levels. I want to present this information, so that people acknowledge that color subconsciously influences every decision in our daily lives. It may be just a hue but the impact it has varies, from instant recognition to mood swings. I consider color to be one of the most important determinants of human behavior and believe that this study of hues, interlinked with emotions will shed some light on the scale in which it affects our judgments. Through a wide range of examples and studies I hope to convince my readers that each color tells a story and helps you write one of your own.

Corresponding Author:- Jiya Gupta

Warm and Cool Colors: A Dichotomy of Moods and Emotions:

The concept of warm and cool colors has been written about for hundreds of years. Most theories start with the classic six-point color wheel (three primary colors and three secondary colors). A dividing line splits the wheel into warm and cool. Designers are always throwing around terms such as warm colors and cool colors. But what do they mean?

‘Warm colors’ is the term used to describe any color that is vivid or bold in nature. It includes shades of red, yellow and orange. This color group is usually associated with feelings of happiness, optimism and energy. Red evokes excitement, passion and courage which helps convey urgency and caution. Red is a dynamic color as it is used to represent two ends of the feeling spectrum - a romantic nature or extreme rage. Orange, on the other hand, represents independence, creativity and gives a very fresh, encouraging impression. Yellow symbolizes enthusiasm, opportunity, positivity which results in a relaxing atmosphere and an energizing awareness. Warm colors like these are used by many industries as it is considered the most appetizing and grabbing color of the spectrum.

The second major group of colors is ‘cool colors’, which is a term used to describe any color that is relatively subdued and evokes poise. It includes shades of green, blue, pink and purple. Green represents tranquility, good luck, health, and jealousy. This color on the spectrum also symbolizes growth, harmony, reliability, balance, and serves to provide a relaxing environment where one gets in touch with their roots. How does blue make you feel? It is a color found in abundance in nature and is described as calm and serene or icy, distant and cold. This conservative and traditional hue is favored by many because it represents wisdom, trust, security and stimulates productivity and precision. For generations, pink and violet have been considered feminine colors as they are associated with love, softness and kindness. Pink evokes joy, creativity, vibrancy, euphoria, and has a sense of childish mischief with it. It symbolizes immunity, playfulness and admiration which is used to increase pulse, motivate action and fascinate. Purple or violet is the symbol of royalty, wealth, exotic things and regality. It is a sensual color which shows wisdom and mystery by creating an inspiring, luxurious environment.

Although Black and White are not considered colors, colorists often refer to them as neutral colors because they have a very important effect on our minds. On one hand, Black shows dark power while on the other it creates an atmosphere of formality and sophistication. The use of this color often hides feelings, intimidates and creates fear amongst people. It is also used as a symbol of evil associated with death and mourning. White represents purity, innocence and sterility. Some positive meanings of White are cleanliness, freshness and simplicity while the negative meanings are coldness and isolation. Both are neutral colors which are formal, practical, conservative and create a sense of composure.

Other than the obvious art and design, the knowledge of color psychology is used in various fields. In the subsequent paragraphs, I highlight the use of the importance of color to create and tell stories in our daily lives, interior design, culture, branding and therapy.

Color in Media and Advertising:

Have you ever looked at a brand logo and wondered, how many hours of brainstorming and strategy goes on behind choosing of a certain color? When it comes to choosing its logo and deciding on its branding, every company spends considerable time, effort and money to choose a complimentary color which can attract their customers and serve for easy, instant identification. The fact is that everything ranging from color choice to font is chosen for a specific reason. The Japan Airlines logo is a good case in point (Morton). The image has several components: The bird symbolizes flight, and red communicates power and good luck according to Asians. Therefore, the brand image communicates powerful air transportation and good luck with the journey. Similarly, FedEx uses ‘universal’ symbolism of colors. The green symbolizes ground services while orange communicates high energy and speed of transportation.



Fast food majors, McDonald's and KFC claim to use red in their logos and advertisements as the color evokes hunger. It is a known fact that Media companies like New Channels prefer warm colors in their logos and branding to show power and importance. Animal planet, Woodlands, Starbucks each a name in their domain, use shades of green to showcase their raw origin and effort to 'bring the outside inside'. Computer companies like IBM and DELL use blue in their logos to show reliability and professionalism which is critical messaging for their branding. Twitter and Facebook, both social media leaders, use shades of blue in their logo to create a sense of trust, comfort and similarity and an atmosphere where one can feel free to express without any reservations. Barbie, the fashion doll manufacturer, uses hot pink in its logo to show a feminine streak and attract young children with the promise of adventure. Cadbury, Yahoo and Taco Bell use shades of purple to create a fascinating atmosphere guaranteeing an unforgettable, exotic experience. The versatile black is combined with other colors by brands like Blackberry, Nike, and Adidas to communicate their sleek and modern designs. White is used in marketing by Apple, Gap, Lego and Ford to show safety, new beginnings and sophistication (Cherry).



How Cultures Perceive Color

The way different cultures see and describe the meaning of color varies dramatically around the world. Blue is considered the safest color choice around the world, since it has many positive associations. In North America and Europe blue represents trust, security, and authority, and is considered to be soothing and peaceful. In some

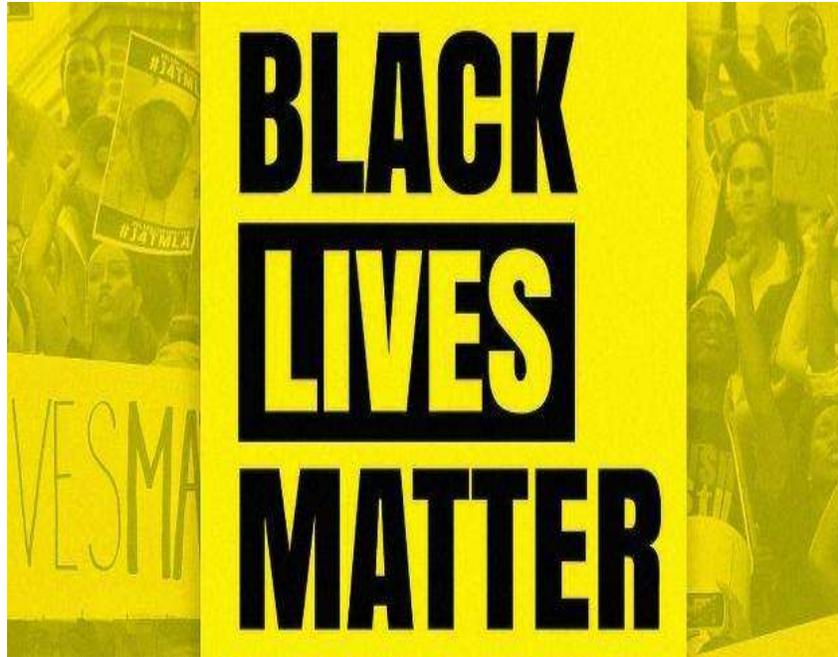
countries, blue symbolizes healing and evil repellence. Blue eye-shaped amulets, believed to protect against the evil eye, are common sights in Turkey, Greece, Iran, Afghanistan, and Albania. In Eastern cultures, blue symbolizes immortality, while in Ukraine it denotes good health. In Hinduism, blue is strongly associated with Krishna, who embodies love and divine joy. An entire period in art is called 'the blue period' where Picasso produced lonely, sad, forlorn themed paintings. Blue was also associated with jazz music to symbolize grief during a time of struggle for the African-Americans.



In the Middle East, Green represents fertility, luck, and wealth, and it's considered the traditional color of Islam. In the 15th century wedding gowns were made from green cloth as they symbolized fertility of the woman. On the other hand, green can also mean infidelity (Shutterstock). In fact, in China, green hats are taboo for men because it signals that their wives have committed adultery! White is worn in some religions during a funeral; however, it is worn on the wedding day in other cultures. Asians prefer to wear red on their wedding day and it symbolizes passion and luck. In Hinduism, saffron (a soft orange color) is considered auspicious and sacred. In the Netherlands, orange is the color of the Dutch Royal family, while it represents sexuality and fertility in Colombia. Historically, in Japan only royalty and the highest ranked Buddhist monks wore purple robes. Purple is also a color of honor — the Purple Heart is the oldest military award still given to US military members. Purple is also associated with piety and faith but in Catholicism, its associated with penitence. In Brazil and Thailand, purple is the color of mourning. In Western cultures, white symbolizes purity, elegance, peace, and cleanliness; brides traditionally wear white dresses at their weddings. But in China, Korea, and some other Asian countries white represents death, mourning, and bad luck, and is traditionally worn at funerals. In Peru, white is associated with angels, good health, and time. Ancient Egyptians believed the color black means life, rebirth but other cultures wear black to mourn during a loved one's funeral. In Africa, Black symbolizes age, maturity, and masculinity.

Colors as a catalyst for change:

The meanings associated with color have evolved over the past few years due to feminism, activism for equality, and so on. Traditionally, pink and blue were thought to be specific colors for girls and boys respectively. However, now in some parts of the world like Belgium, pink is the color for baby boys and blue is the color for baby girls. In many cultures blue food meant traces of poison, but now, weight loss experts recommend having blue fruits and eating from a blue plate as it decreases appetite. Usually associated with seriousness, depression and death, in today's fashion world, black has a new meaning. It is the color worn by most as it is believed to have a slimming and sultry effect. For years, the word and color, black has been associated with inferiority. Even today, the on-going 'Black Lives Matter' movement has opened the eyes of people worldwide and strives to eliminate the stereotypes and negative associations with this color. (Black Lives Matter)



Color for effective Administration:

Color Psychology has some interesting tales to tell when used by Public Administration. In the city of Glasgow in Scotland, in the early 2000s the civic authorities changed the color of some streetlights from yellow to blue to improve the appearance of the city. What they saw was an unexpected drop in the number of crimes committed in those streets. Similarly, in the year 2005 in Nara, a city in Japan, railway authorities installed blue lights onto train platforms to curb suicides. Subsequent reports have shown that no suicides have happened in the years following the installation of the blue lights (Totus). Since then Japan has gone on to install blue lights in railway platforms across the country. The fact that the blue lights had an effect is indisputable. Was it because blue calms a person or simply because blue lights are usually attributed to cop cars thereby giving suicidal people a feeling of being watched?

Color in Interior Design:

When you're trying to communicate or transmit something through interior design, there's no better way to do it than through color. Red is considered great for kitchens as it is known to increase appetite. Red is used in living rooms and front offices as it stimulates conversation and creates a strong first impression. Like red, orange stimulates appetite and is a great kitchen and exercise room color. An apricot or terra cotta orange (increasingly popular in the midwest) is used in meditation rooms and places of worship as it can be relaxing. Yellow is the perfect color for hallways and cafes because it is welcoming and associated with joy, happiness, intellect, and energy (Nicolae). Green is a versatile color and is extensively used to create contrast, drama, richness, and balance in bedrooms and living rooms. Shades of blue are the most popular for medical waiting rooms and bedrooms because they have a calming effect and bring down blood pressure and slow the heart rate. Light or pastel blue can create tranquility and softness in the room but can come across as 'chilly' on the walls in a room that receives very little natural light. Deep midnight blue can create a feeling of luxury when used in a bedroom. Interior designers use purple to add drama, create a hip feel by combining purple, pastels, and modern art; add a bold statement with neon purple, or give a room a mysterious feel with dark purple as an accent. Baby pinks and Baby blues are a popular choice to paint nursery for girls and boys respectively. Interestingly, the demure pink is used to paint prison cells to calm and pacify prison inmates, and sport teams paint their rivals' lockers with pink to keep the players passive and less energetic. In a retail setting, stores will use a neutral color scheme and offset it by placing their products in a high contrast color shelf to draw your attention to the product like in the picture below on the left.



Significance of Color in our everyday life:

Color plays a vital role in our daily lives. School buses are also painted yellow to improve visibility and Fire trucks are painted red to convey danger, caution and urgency. Both yellow and red are colors that get noticed almost instantly and get one's attention faster. In film color schemes are used to set the tone of the scene. This is so effective that you know what emotion the scene carries even before the actor utters a word. Joyous scenes are set in warm color schemes whereas sad, melancholic tones are portrayed with cold color schemes. In scenes building up for passion look for reds, impending doom look for greys, creativity and fantasy is usually purple. Color of the uniform tells a lot about the profession. Doctor white coats symbolize purity and instill confidence amongst patients visiting the doctor. Wearing black business attire makes professionals feel confident (Velarde). The Blue uniforms for attendants make them more approachable which is critical to their line of work. Blue light from phones may keep people up at night but the same color of lighting in offices during the day increases alertness in its occupants. Green and Red dots are now synonymous with vegetarian and non-vegetarian food respectively on food-shelves.

Color and Psychology:

The psychology of color is used by many psychologists and therapists to diagnose and treat their patients. The importance of color psychology, creativity and art therapy for health well-being and self-development should not be underestimated as therapists have established that image language comes before verbal language. Color helps bring forth many stories and helps patients to express themselves, especially when it may be difficult to express themselves verbally. For example, when a patient is shown a red screen their response and reaction help determine their emotional fragility. If one sees red and immediately associates it with feelings of rage, it can be concluded that they are frustrated, and something is eating them from inside. On the other hand, in the same picture if one sees love, it can be said that they are hopeful and to a certain extent satisfied. Yellow is a 'pick you up' color as it lifts your spirits and helps you think optimistically. Blue and purple are used as anti-inflammatory colors and yellow helps stimulate the lymphatic system which helps one think clearly (Babich). White is used to represent the lightness of the soul and black is stereotyped to depict the burdens carried. The color black is also used in inkblot assignments as it effectively tests a person's perception of closure and ability to deduce forms. In a safe environment with directional guided art therapy using color psychology skills and expertise, people can find their voice.

Conclusion:-

Through this article, I hope to have established the close connection between color, emotions and impressions while inspiring you all to explore your own color story. I hope this research can be carried forward over generations as change is the only constant thing. The words and meanings associated with colors will change. Irrespective, each variable impression and emotion must be recorded to introduce people to a wide spectrum of both hues and interpretation. I look forward to my article inspiring people to record the impact of color in every field of the world using statistical data. The takeaway from this article is that we should not underestimate the significance of

something just because it is all around us. Whether we like it or not, realize it or not, color is and will always have a deeper meaning. Each of the associations listed in the article, helps us understand that color is one of the strongest guiding forces in our life as it impacts almost every aspect of our lives. Our decisions of clothes, our response to people, our perception of an individual's personality is affected by colors. Every color speaks to us in a different way. Every shade influences our path and decisions. Every tone makes us wonder. Secretly whispering in our ears, colors help us write our story. At the end, my objective is to encourage you to find your own color story.

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