

The meaning of colours in marketing

Jaroslava Dědková ¹

Abstract: The satisfaction of consumer's needs belongs to the main aims of modern marketing. Then the satisfied consumer becomes a base, where all other marketing activities develop. Consumer's shopping is significantly influenced by cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. The knowledge of these factors makes possible to use the influence of colours on consumer's behaviour in all marketing tools. The article is about the meaning of colours and about notation of colours in visual marketing's elements and in marketing communication in the Czech Republic and also in a single structure.

Keywords: cultural, social, personal and psychological factors, influence of colours

INTRODUCTION

Satisfying the customer's needs belongs to the main objectives of modern marketing. The satisfied customer is becoming the basis on which other marketing activities are developed. The consumer purchases are significantly influenced by social, personal and psychological factors. [4] Colours also count among the factors which can influence the customer. Colours have their invariable meaning and present an important psychological tool for the preparation of business strategies. The colour creation or so called colour marketing can be applied during the product design, logo and package proposal, marketing communication – promotional material creation, in media, while creating a web page, during advertising and in the business effort – merchandising.

According to the marketing specialists, colours represent the fastest method of transferring the product meaning as they can catch the customer's attention.

The effect of colours includes the emotional symbolism, association and the particular value of the colour. The knowledge of customers' colour preferences is important for all marketing workers. The way how individual colours can be perceived is connected not only with physiology and physics but also with the psyche, cultural development and the experience of humans and individual nations and regions. [8] The subjective relation to colours, which no schematic test can reproduce, arises here.

The article deals with the meaning of colours and colour symbolism in some visual elements of marketing and marketing communication.

METHODOLOGY

During the processing of the contribution several methods of information survey were used.

¹Jaroslava Dědková is with the Faculty of Economics, Department of marketing, Technical university of Liberec, Czech Republic

The most important part was retrieving the information in professional literature and on the Internet.

1. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The knowledge of factors influencing the consumer behaviour enables to make use of the colour influence in all marketing tools. [9]

1.1 Cultural factors

Cultural factors have the widest and deepest influence on the consumer behaviour. It is the complex of certain behaviour and actions, when the society creates certain norms which have the impact on material and immaterial symbols. The different cultures have various meaning for colours, vide table 1.

Tab.1 Symbology of colours

blue	Holland – warmth	Iran - death	Sweden – cold
green	America – health	Jungle - disease	
yellow	USA – warmth	France – infidelity	
pink	Asia – expensive	USA - cheap	
sadness	Asia - white	Brazil - purple	Mexico – yellow
country of product	Asia - red	Europe – blue, green	Africa – cinnamon

Source: [5]

1.2 Social factors

The consumer's behaviour is influenced by social factors, such as referential groups (family, friends, neighbours, religious groups, interest and specialist organisations...). The producers should know **how to attract** and influence the thought leaders of these groups.

Within the family it is possible to identify the differences of colour perception according to sex as the colour preference in both sexes differs considerably. Although both men and women mark the blue colour as the most popular, men naturally prefer clear blue, while women prefer blue with the touch of pink tones. In almost all surveys the blue colour is shown as the most popular colour among consumers. Men usually distinguish only basic colours – as regards to women it is possible to come across the expressions which better characterize individual shades, for example, the olive, creamy, chestnut, etc. colour. The receptiveness of some colours as symbols in men is also

different from women. For example, the red colour for most of women means warmth, whereas men understand the red colour as a warning and danger. The blue colour means depression, business and leadership for most of women, while most men perceive this colour as intelligence, sureness and protection. Men prefer the orange colour to the yellow colour and the blue to red colour. On the contrary, women give preference to the red colour to the yellow colour.

1.3. Personal factors

The shopper's decision depends also on their personal factors, such as the age, life period, employment, economical conditions, lifestyle and personality. Merchants look for the relations between their products and the groups of buyers according to their lifestyles.

The differences of the colour vision according to the age

The pre-school children like deep, bright colours. The best quality of the colour vision is reached between the ages of 20 –30. The colour vision changes with the age, because vision becomes generally less sharp, colours seem to be less intense and blue tones are perceived much darker than in younger people. [1]

These facts are necessary to be taken into consideration when targeting the product at a certain group of potential customers.

1.4 Psychological factors

The consumer's purchasing behaviour is also affected by psychological factors, namely motivation, **perception**, learning, attitudes. [3] The perception of a colour depends on the characteristics of the eye sight, conditions of sighting regarding the brightness and contrast and also on psychological state of the observer and on their psychology. [2] A colour is therefore the element which the human brain perceives as the input quantity and only then shapes, details and voices are perceived. [7]

1.4.1 Emotional symbolism

The psychological background of visual perception, on which the colour symbolism is based, exists in each social formation. The colour symbolism influences small and big groups in different periods and intensity.[1]

The peculiarity of the colour symbolism is its ambiguity. **The red colour** has been the first almost always and everywhere. The symbolism imparts to blood and fire, it is the colour of the life power and fertility, love and passion. **The green colour** has always been the symbol of life, freshness, youth, nature, spring and hope. **Blue** is the colour of water and air, infinite clear sky. **Golden yellow** resembles the sunshine, therefore it has the same meanings as the sun, **yellow** is the colour of intelligence, wisdom and knowledge, it is the symbol of plenty and fullness of life. **White** is the colour of light, which comprises of all colours, thence it symbolizes the highest values. It is the colour of chastity, innocence, purity and cheerfulness. **Black** is the

colour of darkness, the symbol of sadness, end and death. However, even the black colour has its positive side. In eastern countries it is the colour of fertility. Black is the colour of a fertile land, black clouds are full of rain which brings life-giving water. [8] The perception can be characterized as the colour of light connected with the shape and surface. The colour perception depends on the shape acceptance of the objects viewed. The better colour distinguishing occurs if the colours are on the objects rather than area patterns. Nonetheless, only the contrast, the character of surfaces, their structure, and light and shade reflex ion determine the colour quality. [1]

The man can distinguish by the visual comparison 480 – 500 thousand colour perceptions. [7] Each person has created a certain key to the visual perception, and their colour abstractions of thought are fixed on the basis of object perception of the outside world.

1.4.2 Associations

The colour affects person's moods by associations, which are triggered on the basis of **past experience**. The colour perception is often accompanied by strong emotional experiences; they can be both pleasant and unpleasant, strongly influencing the attitude to colours. The colour of light or object can immediately precipitate a certain experience. What is more, only mentioning this experience can cause the perception of the colour to be formed.[8]

Blue and the coldest colour of all, blue – green, are the colours of cold water, ice. Conversely, the warm red colour resembles fire, yellow and yellow-orange are associated with the sunshine in our imagination. Experiences, which accompany each perception, give colours constantly new and new meanings. The colour evokes also the taste.

2. THE COLOUR IN THE TOOLS OF MARKETING

2.1 The package

Nowadays the package is becoming a powerful marketing tool. The well-designed package can convince the customer about the value of a product, and therefore represents a significant promotional element. Psychologists have proved the contribution of personal interests and taste when choosing a coloured package, also the fact how consumers direct their attention according to their favourite colour or the neighbouring colour, while characterizing the personality. In the package technique colours always stand out in combination, minimally in pairs which affect each other reciprocally and strengthen the effect. The black colour with white or gold, red with blue, red with green, yellow with blue are very frequent for general use. The colours which are less frequently used are: light blue, dark green, ultramarine – light blue-green, pink – brown, violet – ochre-yellow, violet – pink (looking distinguishably and expensively), purple – brown. English red – light grey (percieved exquisitely), wine-coloured – silver, orange – purple, olive green –red-brown. These combinations are

influenced by fashion and come and leave with it.[1]. The table no. 2 shows the colour combinations according to the customer's taste, recommended to graphic designers. [1]

Table 2 – Colour combination according to the customer's taste

Selected colours	Colour associations
Red and orange	friendly dynamic
Blue and black	distinguished, noble, precious, excellent
Blue and gold	solemnly splendid
Red and gold	beautiful, solemn
Pastel green	unobtrusive, decent, free
Pink	romantic, adorable
Light violet	soft, reserved, kind
Red – brown and cream	taste evoking, association of chocolate, coffee

Source: [1]

2.2 Environment

The colour of environment is affected also by its impression. Image, appearance of a wholesale and primarily of retail is also very important not only for the consumer but also for the staff. [12]

Each outlet bears upon the consumer's senses and mind by its arrangement, organisation and suitable colours.

It has been scientifically proved that certain colour environment activates customers, concentrates their attention and creates working and shopping state of relaxation. A colour can improve the general impression of the place in terms of feelings. The brightness of the dark places can be increased by the light paint of walls, whereas deep or darker tones suppress the glare. For example, the warm colours of walls and facilities lower the feeling of cold of the places with cold temperatures. Contrariwise, the cold colours of walls reduce the feeling of heat. Less bright, less deep and cold tones of colours increase the general space perception, conversely, bright, deep and warm colour tones make the general space perception smaller.[1] The emotional state of a customer is influenced by both individual colours and colour combinations.[2]

There is a specific relation between the colours and sense impressions. On the basis of spectrum division into cold and warm colours it is possible to create so called scales with the temperature factor. Deep and bright shades of yellow, red, orange and yellow-green, violet, purple, carmine, red, orange and light green colours can be perceived as warm. They create the impression of warmth, joy, comfort and energy. As cold colours, not much deep and dark shades of light green, green, dark green, azure, ultramarine, dark blue and violet colours are perceived. They create a cheerless mood, they are distant from the customer, but at the same time, stability and durability are felt from them. [8]

2.3 Communication

The company must also communicate with its current and potential customers. The marketing staff must know how to use colours in advertising, sales promotion, public relation and personal sale for the purpose of informing the target customers about the existence of a product and its value. Colours are one of the most important symbols, on which the communication is based. [3,10]

2.3.1 Advertising

As regards to the advertising, printed and broadcasted advertisements, inscriptions on packing, moving signs, brochures and leaflets, prospects and posters, repeating of the advertising, billboards, projected advertising, audiovisual devices, symbols and logos, DVD, video tapes, internet, web pages can be used.

Recruiting agencies around the world possess nowadays statistically processed data about the effectiveness of the colour compositions, themes and slogans at hand. As soon as the **commercial** is released, it is analysed by the competition company and this is how the applied theory, which is the subject of trainings at many art-industrial and graphic schools, is developing.

The readability of writing plays a big role in advertising. The most frequently used combination regarding the readability is black on white, black on yellow, green on white, dark blue on white and dark blue on light blue. Satisfying combinations are considered: red on white, yellow on black, orange on black, black on light blue, white on black. The bad combinations are assumed to be yellow on white, black on blue, purple on black, red on blue-green. [1]

2.3.2 Sales promotion

Activities or materials which function as a short-term stimulus for the sale or purchase of a product or service are included into sales promotion. The sales promotion comprises objects of the consumer sales promotion, commercial sales promotion and company sales promotion. Competitions, games, lotteries, bets, rewards and gifts, samples, **fairs and trade exhibitions**, displays, demonstrations, vouchers, discounts, low interest credit, gala affairs, repurchasing of the old version when purchasing the new one, long-term programmes, bound businesses.

The international character gets a colourful expression **at the world exhibitions**, where colours are used as the eye-catchers and symbolical identification of a nation. The colourful decoration has a stimulating purpose. It is not only the colour itself but also the content link with the theme in which it is used. [1] In the organisation of exhibition the choice of the area, architectonic solution of the exposition, commercial art, invitations and promotion materials including the accompanying program is very important.

2.3.3 Public relations

PR abets the reciprocal adaptation between the organisations and the public. It looks after the relation of a company and the public. The aim of the work with the public is to ensure a convenient climate for realization of the company's aims, which can be best achieved by the attentive care about the company image. Building, maintaining and care of positive manifesting picture are exceptionally important. It includes articles in the press, speeches, seminars, annual reports, charity gifts, sponsorship, publications, and contacts with the local communities, lobbying, company magazines, presentations in media, gala affairs. Public relations emphasize the social responsibility, ecological responsibility. [7] Furthermore, the corporation identity politics, which is about the achieving the identity of a buyer with the company, belongs to this area. It is the unified visual style, which includes logo, company colours and the use in printed and digital materials. The unified visual style is what distinguishes the firm from the others and the way how the potential or current customer is able to simply identify the firm. The right combination of colours and unified colour expression also helps in this matter.

2.3.4 Personal selling

The direct communication and fostering the business relation among two or several persons with the aim of selling the product or service together with creating a long-term positive relation is called the personal selling. It enables to create all kinds of relationship forms, commercial to deep friendly ones. It brings about the customer's feedback. It includes commercial offers, commercial meetings, active programmes, samples, fairs, trade fairs. It is important to imagine what the sellers' clothes say, with the help of which pattern and colours the seller creates their wardrobe and how it can affect the customer. [9]

CONCLUSION

The colour is a necessary guide of the human's existence as its perception is given by nature, it is used in many areas and it is a means of communication, signal and expression of his mental and physical states. The colour is a part of esthetical acquisition of the world. The colour has its significance in the cultural development, very noticeably characterizes some periods of time, it is the means of expression, it is an actual, immediate part of life, it belongs to the lively rhythm with all its changes and perspectives.

The general meanings of colours don't change, they are stable. It means that dark blue always means calmness and satisfaction, even if this imagination of calmness appeals to a person or they don't long for it. The members of various nations, old or young, men or women, educated or uneducated, all give answers which surprisingly

correspond. The stable general meanings of colours are actually based on their physiological and psychological effects and on the characteristics which the humans have attributed based on thousand- year-old experience.

The meanings and symbols of colours must be considered as the dynamically variable process, which absorbs all traditional and known. It is capable to constantly receive new stimulations and to vary the meaning according to a new situation, new stimulus, development of colours in the space and time. Because of the wide range of various meanings in different times it is very difficult to present the comprehensive and systematic picture of the development of colour perception.[11]

REFERENCES:

- [1] BARAN, Ludvík. *Barva v umění, kultuře a společnosti*. SPN Praha 1978
- [2] HABEL, Jiří. *Světelná technika a osvětlování*, FCC Public Praha 1995
- [3] DĚDKOVÁ, J., HONZÁKOVÁ, I.: *Základy marketingu*. TUL 2008.ISBN 978-80-7372-411-5
- [4] KOTLER, P: *Marketing management*, 9.vyd. Grada Publishing, 1998, ISBN 80-7169-600-5
- [5] KOUDELKA, J.: *Spotřební chování a marketing*, 1.vyd. Grada Publishing,ISBN 80-7169-372-3
- [6] MUSOVÁ, Z.: Spoločensky zodpovedné podnikanie – základ budovania vzťahov so záujmovými skupinami. In: Vzťahový marketing ako nástroj konkurencieschopnosti podniku. Medzinárodné vedecké kolokvium. Bratislava: OF EU 2008. ISBN 978-80-225-2624-1.
- [7] PIHAN, Roman.*Základy kolorimetrie*. Dostupné z: <http://www.fotografovani.cz/art/fozak_df/rom_1_06_harmony.html>
- [8] PLESKOTOVÁ, Petra. *Svět barev*. Albatros ,1987
- [9] POLIAČIKOVÁ, E. 2006. *Spotrebiteľské správanie a trendy jeho vývoja v SR*. In: Instore, Apríl 2006, Bratislava, str. 8-9, ISSN1336-2348.
- [10] SCHIFFMAN.L.,KANUK L.:*Nákupní chování*, 1.vyd. Computer Press,2004.ISBN 80-251-0094-4
- [11] http://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychologie_barev
- [12] ŠÁLKOVÁ, D., HES, A., REGNEROVÁ, M.: *Vybrané faktory působící na chování mužů a žen v maloobchodě*.In Sborník příspěvků z mez.vědecké konference: Obchod, jakost a finance v podnicích - determinanty konkurencieschopnosti VI., ČZU v Praze, ISBN 978-80-213-1774-1, s.212-217