

→ happens subconsciously, these subliminal responses can have a very real effect on the viewer's interpretation of what they're seeing.

Colour choice might be just one component to consider when creating an overall brand identity, but research has found that it has the most significant impact on the consumer. Studies by the Institute for Color Research have found that in the first 90 seconds of observing an item, the viewer has already made a subconscious judgement – up to 90 per cent of which is based on its colour. These are startling results for designers. When branding your company, a product or service, it would be impossible to take into account the myriad of personal colour

associations your audience may have – but a basic awareness is still essential.

Colour symbolism is also dependent on anecdotal evidence and not scientific studies. The idea that 'pink cells calm prisoners' or that 'red cars get more tickets' have not been proven (nor have any studies been undertaken in an attempt to validate these claims).

Having said that, there are many implications that surface again and again regarding the impact of colour on the viewer, and subsequently can't be ignored. Blue stands out as the favourite colour of both male and female participants, from all age groups, in both the US and 21 other countries according to a study by Joe Hallock (www.joehallock.com). This mirrors the results of an ongoing survey being taken by visitors to www.psychology.about.com. Here, the colour blue was considered the favourite of 77,063 visitors, followed by green, purple, black, red, pink, yellow, orange, white and brown.

Research has also shown that when consumers scan the shelves in



Steve Campbell, managing director
"Selling a colour to a client can be difficult, particularly when the client already has a firm preference or an aversion to a certain colour. One way to overcome this is to focus on the audience when presenting your colour choices to the client and explain in detail why the chosen colours are relevant and how they'll help promote or sell their product or service. It's important both parties are comfortable with the finished design, both on a professional level and also taking into consideration personal preferences." www.debutcreate.com

supermarkets, they do so by looking for brand colours, not brand names. This reinforces the findings by the Institute for Color Research in regard to the immediate impact of colour on the consumer. Competitor brands often use this behaviour to their advantage, by adopting competitor brand colours. It seems to be fair game within the retail market, and something that's done to great effect by most of the major food chains. Many store-branded goods mimic the packaging and labelling of national brands, drawing the consumer's attention to them and manipulating their association, thus placing the products on a more equal footing with the larger, established brands.

Research by the University of Loyola also found that colour increases brand awareness by 80 per cent. As a

design agency, we call upon much of this research when creating or working with brands. It's important that clients aren't automatically dismissive of a particular colour due to personal preference before preliminary research has been undertaken, as this personal choice may rule out the most appropriate colour.

In many cases colour choices can be influenced by current market trends and can be selected or rejected due to the association with other established brands. This disassociation with competitor brand colours is quite clearly displayed within the mobile phone market, where the four major UK phone companies are easily distinguishable by their colour branding: O2 is blue; T-Mobile is pink; Orange, orange; and Vodafone, red. Each has their own distinct and separate brand

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Colouring a brand using a broad palette of similar tones provides insight into how colour impacts on the viewer. There are **stronger and weaker versions of the same logo** here, with each having the potential to generate a different response from the viewer



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