

Applications of Color

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about color theory and its applied uses. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Physiological and Psychological Effects of Color

Color has physiological and psychological effects that often determine its use around us; it affects us physically, mentally, and emotionally. Colors can make a statement, call forth a response, create an atmosphere, and more. Therefore, it's helpful to know how color is being used in specific fashions everyday to help dictate responses, trends, and behaviors.

➞ **EXAMPLE** The color red is said to have a physiological effect in that it increases blood pressure, circulation, and pulse rate. It's also said to stimulate your sense of smell and improve appetite. On a psychological level, it's been a color associated with anger, yet also vitality, ambition, and awareness.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Blue has the opposite effect of red, in that it slows down pulse rate, lowers blood pressure, and can lower body temperature and even deepen your breathing. On a psychological level, the color blue is linked with eliminating mental stress, helping you relax, and providing you with mental clarity. But if it's too dark of a blue, then it can lead to depression.

Because color can have such a physical and mental impact, it's often used in **chromotherapy**, or color therapy, which is a complementary medical method of treating disease with color.

Think about what was mentioned earlier about color being able to raise or lower blood pressure. In chromotherapy, colors are often said to correspond to and stimulate different areas of the body.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Red is said to stimulate adrenal glands and help increase stamina or energy, while blue can stimulate the pituitary gland, which then regulates bleeding patterns.

If that still sounds too far-fetched, then just think about color's therapeutic use for mental conditions, like stress or depression.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Consider a single mom who's been working all day, picks up her kids late from school, then finally gets home, where the first thing the kids do is put a hole in the wall. Now imagine that the wall is painted a fiery red. That color isn't going to help lower her blood pressure at this point. However, chromotherapy could help with that stress by maybe lowering her blood pressure or putting her in a more relaxed state.



Chromotherapy

A complementary medical method of treating disease with color.

2. Cultural Impact of Color

Color is also used symbolically across cultures.

IN CONTEXT

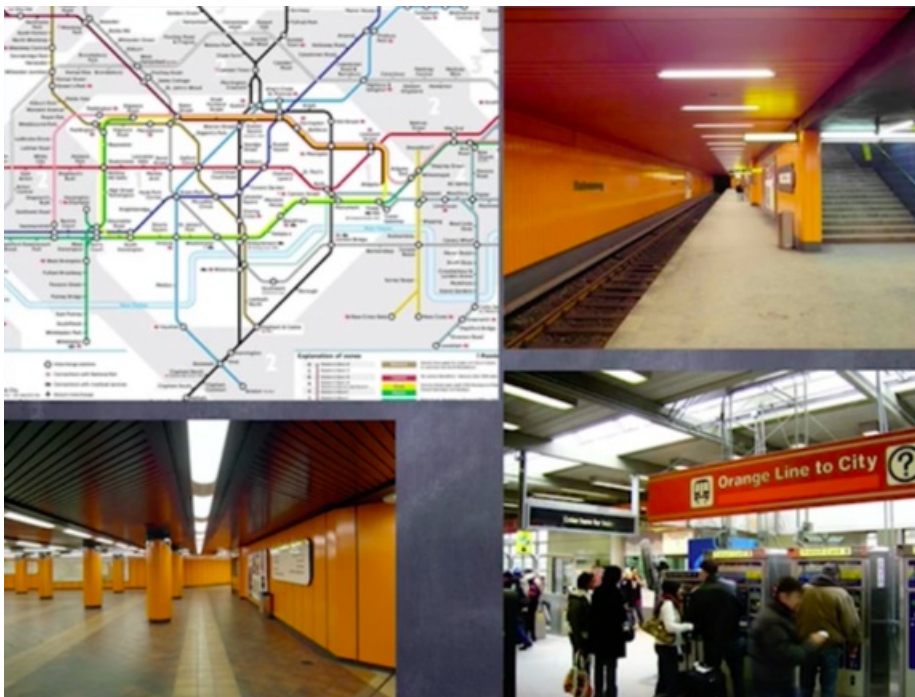
In Western culture, red is symbolic of love and passion. You'll see its use across Western holidays like Valentine's Day and Christmas. But in Eastern culture, red is symbolic of prosperity and good fortune, so you'll see this color often used for New Year's and traditional weddings.

In Western cultures, white is symbolic of purity and peace; however, in Eastern cultures, white is symbolic of death, so it is often used in funerals. In Western culture, the color of death and mourning is black, so that's what is used at funerals.

3. Practical Uses of Color

Color has very practical uses, like **wayfinding**, which are visual systems which assist the viewer in finding a location or following a certain path within an environment.

Take a look at the map of underground London.



Since zones are color-coded, the viewer is able to assess his or her current or desired location a lot quicker

than if this map were entirely black. This map gets put to use everyday to help people orient themselves when using public transportation. You know you're in the orange lines because the buildings are orange, or the subways, trains, and buses are orange.

You can imagine how this would get exponentially more difficult if you were trying to navigate around town, and every zone and line was just a singular color.

Wayfinding demonstrates a very practical use of color to supplement route names and numbers, making navigation easier.



TERM TO KNOW

Wayfinding

Visual systems which assist the viewer in finding a location or following a certain path within an environment.

4. Colors and Trends

Color also plays a very big and important role in trends.

Companies and organizations try to predict the next annual trends in color usage, and this is called **color forecast**.



TERM TO KNOW

Color Forecast

Annual trend predictions made by color marketing and various design trade organizations.

5. Color Characteristics

While we touched on this idea earlier, we can now look more in depth at the different characteristics of common colors.

RED: Red is often associated with passion and hunger, as mentioned previously. It has the power of attraction. Red is used a lot in restaurant or food product logos, such as Coca-Cola, McDonald's, and KFC.

ORANGE: Orange is meant to be a vibrant, playful, and energetic color. It's heavily used in industries where children are the focus. Think of the Nickelodeon logo, for instance.

YELLOW: Yellow is meant to represent happiness, warmth, and oftentimes caution. But yellow itself can be an overpowering color, so it's difficult to use. Therefore, you'll notice that yellow typically gets used with other colors. This is especially true when it comes to food chains because they want you to feel happy with the food you're about to purchase. You can see yellow used in the logos for McDonald's, Burger King, and other fast food chains.

GREEN: Green is associated with nature, health, and renewal. You'll see green used a lot in eco-friendly, recycling, or agricultural companies. You'll actually even see this color in the British Petroleum logo, which is a bit strange.

BLUE: Blue is used quite often in corporate logos because it's a professional color associated with trust, authority, and loyalty. For instance, think of Intel, IBM, Facebook, and Twitter.

PURPLE: Purple tends to be associated with royalty, elegance, education, and religion. You'll see purple commonly used in religious institutions and educational organizations.

PINK: Pink is representative of beauty. Pink is often used in beauty-related or fashion-related logos, or companies dealing with children's toys, such as Barbie.

BROWN: Brown is meant to be a reliable, earthly, neutral color. You'll see it commonly used for agriculture, construction, and sometimes food-related products, such as coffee and chocolate.

WHITE: White is a pure, clean color. It's often used in logos to create negative space. For instance, think about the Adobe logo. Apple loves using white in its products as well.

BLACK: Black is authoritative, mysterious, bold, and sophisticated. You'll often see black used to create a sense of mystery in high-end products, such as a black luxury car or a sleek black television.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you looked at the **physiological and psychological effects of color**. You also learned about the **cultural impacts of color** and **practical uses of color**. Finally, you learned about the process of setting **color trends**, and the various **characteristics associated with different colors**.

Keep up the learning and have a great day!

Source: THIS WORK IS ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA AUTHOR MARIO E. HERNANDEZ



TERMS TO KNOW

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