

Brand Personality (Web vs. Print): Consumer Perception of Color in Branding

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to (1) determine if consumers will apply the conventional color associations to hues when they are used in a brand's logo, (2) to examine whether color affects consumers' perceptions of a brand's personality, (3) to investigate whether consumers view a color as more appropriate for a logo when brand personality and color associations are congruent, and lastly (4) determine if web versus print portrayal of branding plays a significant role in perception. The theories of anthropomorphism and associative learning theory will be used to explain how consumers relate to brand, perceive brand personality, and form associations. Participants will be recruited for the study through the technique of snowball sampling via Facebook. The survey will be distributed over the course of two weeks with a projected 150 usable survey samples (100 web and 50 print). If the results indicate that all hypotheses are supported, then we can reject the overall null hypothesis and claim that color in logos does play a significant role in brand perception in both web and print mediums.

- H1:** Consumers will apply conventional color associations to colors that are used in a logo.
- H2:** Consumers will attribute personality traits to brands through the use of color in the logo.
- H3:** When the brand personality and color associations are congruent, the color will be more appropriate for the brand's logo.
- H4:** There will be a significant difference in the web-viewing consumer color and brand perceptions versus the print-viewing consumer color and brand perceptions.

Introduction

Companies invest a substantial amount of time and money into developing a successful brand. The U.S. Small Business Administration recommends spending roughly 8% of all income on further brand development through marketing and advertising (Boykin 2016). Some competitive markets can have up to 20% spent on these efforts. Over time, consumers will learn about a brand's identity through repeated exposure to the brand's different elements (Durgee, 1988), whether it be the logo, packaging, or even the brand's jingle. Consumers more easily relate to and identify with the brand when all of the brand elements are cohesive and create a unified brand identity. The brand's logo and brand personality are often key points of association for consumers (Pittard, Ewing, & Jevons, 2007; Plummer, 2000). For example, some brands have a fun, exciting, and innovative personality where as others are trustworthy and reliable. Together logo and personality type build associations that create strong mental and emotional reactions help to build the brands equity (Gabay, Moskowitz, Beckley, & Ashman, 2009).

Brand managers use color as eye catchers and stimulants to attract new customers and to accelerate a mental documentation of a brand. Design elements, such as color, are used as a way to communicate with consumers and play a substantial role in consumer decision making when shopping time is limited (Silayoi & Speece, 2004 & 2007). Marketing managers have shifted their focus from short term sales goals to consumer equity creating marketing campaigns that focus on the consumer's perceptions and relationship with the brand. This helps to develop long term relationships with the consumer and long term sales. The colors used in a brand's logo help consumers to gain information about the brand's personality and is key in the initial building of a relationship with the consumer.

Statement of the Problem

Although there has been an extensive amount of study and theory developed concerning the creation and development of brands, study and theory on the relationship between brand logo and brand personality is currently deficient. It is extremely vital as well as viable to a company for consumers to be able to identify the brand's personality from their logo in all forms because brand personality is necessary in building a relationship between the brand and the consumer. Furthermore, there is currently a gap in the present knowledge when it comes to understanding how color affects consumers' perceptions of brand personality. The odds are more than likely that there are currently numerous brands that have logos that in fact contain colors that convey notions and concepts opposite of the associations that the brand is trying to convey. When companies go through rebranding phases and develop new logos, consumers often become confused about the brand's personality and might not feel as if they have known the brand and company as well as originally thought. (Ridgway, 2011). This is exactly what

occurred when Gap attempted to introduce a more contemporary logo (Birchall, 2010) and it failed miserably at reaching their target market. This can result in decreased profits for the firm. This is one of many instances of an ongoing issue that is happening with Fortune 500 brands across the globe that desires attention and further research for prevention.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to determine if consumers will apply the “established” color associations to hues when they are used in a brand’s logo in both web and print visuals. Secondly, this study will examine whether or not color affects consumers’ perceptions of a brand’s personality. And thirdly, the present study will investigate whether consumers view a color as more appropriate for a logo when brand personality and color associations are consistent with one another. This paper will cover a variety of previous research and literature examining color and the color associations that consumers have learned. The theory of anthropomorphism (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998) will be used to explain how consumers begin to perceive brands as having personalities. Finally, an exploration of color and brand associations will be done in relation to color appropriateness in a brand’s logo.

Significance of the Study

Very limited research has been done on how brand personality is perceived by consumers through the colors used in a brand’s logo; especially on if there are differing perceptions between web and print formats. Although other research has looked at color being used in corporate logos and found certain colors to have specific association (Hynes, 2009), it has failed to include brand personality in the analysis. Marketers work very diligently on communicating a brand’s personality to the consumer. They also work on creating a successful logo that by itself can fully represent the brand. Knowing how consumers are affected by the colors that are used in a logo will allow companies to more accurately choose colors that will evoke the desired positive responses to their brands.

Review of Literature

This is a literary review for the main ideas presented in this study, establishes the theoretical framework that supports this study, and outlines the hypothesis for this study.

Color Defined

Color is used in consumers’ everyday lives to interpret information. Color is a function of light and varying wavelengths; it has historically been associated with

life (Birren, 1950; Zelanski & Fisher, 2010). These wavelengths determine the hue of a color. Short hues create cool colors while long hues warm cool colors. With these opposing hues come opposite physiological and psychological effects (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992).

Physiological Effects of Color

This study is hoping to determine how color can effect a consumer's perspective of a brand. According to Birren (1978) when humans react to color it is about more than just what the eye sees, but how the brain interprets it. Zelanski and Fischer declared that different colors can influence different aspects of the human body; for example, orange wavelengths tend to affect the immune system and can help the digestive system (Zelanski & Fisher, 2010). Colors also have significant power in point of purchase scenarios to attract and pull consumers into a store (Bellizzi, Crowley, & Hasty, 1983). It has been reported that warm colors create excitement which can lead to higher blood pressure and a greater frequency of eye blinks (Lee & Rao, 2010). Consistent across all research is the theory that cool colors are preferred to warm color environments therefore they evoke more positive associations to consumers, particularly in retail settings (Babin, 2003).

Color Associations

There are many attitudes of color that have been declared and accepted from previous research. One of the purposes of this survey research is to determine how truly fitting these attitudes are to their respective colors based off of a developed sample. Red is associated with many different attitudes and objects including fire or blood (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999). It [red] also can be related to love and health (Kargere, 1979). The most famously known attitude of red although today is hunger due to its excessive use as an appetite stimulant in copious restaurants (Hynes 2009). One of the more obvious and more directly correlated with human nature is green being associated with nature and growth (Birren, 1950). Orange is known as a mix of the energy of red with the happiness of yellow (Bourn 2011) therefore is known to trigger joy, enthusiasm and creativity. Blue is described as sincere and purple is associated with royalty (Birren, 1950).

Colors used in products and specifically logos influences perceptions and therefore consumer purchase decisions. For example, when consumers see a health supplement with black and white lettering across the bottle, they are less likely to purchase the product because they associate black and white with poison (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999). Overall, consumers have a positive and pleasant outlook on brands and environments prioritizing a blue color scheme.

Logo Associations

Logos are the essential key in creating associations that consumers begin to recognize after exposure and create a relationship between consumers and the brand. Time and space does not always allow for the brand name and logo therefore logos are consistently used standalone to represent products in a recognizable fashion. With in-store brand competition steadily increasing it has become extremely imperative for marketers' that consumers are able to identify with a brand from the exposure to their logo. Choosing the appropriate colors for a brand will in turn increase a brand's equity (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006).

Consumers Perception of Brand Personality

Plummer (1984) explains that brand personality has two sides. The first is input (brand personality statement) which is what the marketers want the consumers to perceive about the brand and the second is out-take which is what the consumers actually perceive about the brand. A brand's personality can be described similarly to that of a human personality and can be seen as credible or even friendly (Blackston,1992). This is why the perception of personality through a brand's logo is so vital to the success of the brand. It gives them more meaning and has a direct correlation with brand equity.

The most common instrument used to measure brand personality is Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale (BPS). In the study conducted by Aaker (1997) participants were asked to evaluate a group of brands given information about the brand's characteristics. From this study five dimensions of brand personality were defined, which were made up of 15 facets totaling 42 personality traits which will be used in the survey for this study similar to that of JL Ridgway's original experiment.

The five dimensions of Aaker's brand personality scale are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness (Aaker, 2001). Sincerity is used to describe a brand that is honest and warm. Excitement captures a brand that is high energy, whereas competence indicates a brand that is dependable. Sophistication and Ruggedness are less clear in the way they are defined, but can be denoted by such characteristics as charm and class, and masculinity and toughness, respectively (Aaker, 2001).

The five dimensions of brand personality will be used in this study to categorize brands by their personality that is perceived by the colors used. Consumers tend to gravitate towards brands that have personalities similar to their own (Batra, Lehmann & Singh, 1993). They are more likely to choose products they can identify with personality-wise.

Anthropomorphism

The theory of anthropomorphism helps to explain how consumers can view brands as having a personality and how this can facilitate the development of a consumer-brand relationship. Anthropomorphizing is when humans apply human attributes to inanimate objects (Aaker, 1997; Fournier 1998). This is often due to the influence of marketers in developing criterion that is displayed alongside a brand or through a logo that allows consumers to relate a brand to human characteristics. These can include emotions, skills, beliefs and many other attributes that personify a brand. The ways that these attributes can be conveyed is endless, but for the purpose of this study, color will be emphasized. Anthropomorphism is vital to marketers as it is the beginning step in consumers developing a relationship with a brand that can progress in a negative or positive direction.

Appropriateness of Logo Color Choice

Appropriateness of color choice has previously been studied because it is thought to be a main concern of marketers in selecting brand elements (Bottomley & Doyle, 2006). Color combination is also said to be one of the most essential factors in creating an advertisement that is pleasant and appealing to consumers (Schiller, 1935). It has also been noted that appropriateness can be subjective, but also that a consensus of opinion should be taken in order to determine the general appropriateness, which is where this study comes into play.

Materials and Methods

In order to test the hypotheses in this study a survey will be conducted. A logo will be developed to determine if consumers will apply conventional color associations to hues in a brand's logo, if color affects consumers' perceptions of a brand's personality, and if consumers view a color as more appropriate for a logo when brand personality and color associations are congruent. Facebook, a social networking site with over 1 billion users, will be used to distribute the pretest and survey for the digital version. For the print version, Clemson University students will be used of differing ages and majors. A pretest will be administered to a group of Facebook users of a variety of ages to ensure that the participants have no previous associations for the design of the logo and that it will be easily understood by participants.

Stimulus (Logo) Development

The logo used for the main study will be modeled after Hynes's (2009) study of corporate logos as previously used in the research of JL Ridgway. Although Hynes (2009) used multiple logo designs to represent brand categories, this study uses only one logo design to ensure participants are not inferring information about the brand other than the colors used. The logo was created using three geometric

shapes: a circle, triangle and square. Geometric shapes will be used because they simplistic and humans tend to choose form over color so it helps to reduce the distraction of the shape (Birren, 1978). The colors for the logos in this study are adapted from Bottomley and Doyle (2006). The colors are defined by pantones color system as: green (3435U), blue (2747U), red (1797Y), yellow (3965U), pink (213U), and purple (2612U).

Survey Section 1

The first part of the survey measures the associations that consumers have with colors (H1). To test hypothesis 1, participants will be shown a logo in a variety of colors (e.g., green, blue, red, yellow, dark pink, and purple). Participants will be asked to select the association that they think best fits the color in the logo from a list of five (e.g. trustworthy, natural, playful, warm, prestigious, etc.). Associations will be chosen based on findings by Hyne's (2009) study of color and meaning in logos. One association matched, others will be randomly chosen.

Next, (H2) two will be tested. Participants will be shown a logo in one of the colors listed above and then asked, "If this logo represented a brand, please select personality traits that you feel would best represent the brand. Check all that apply." A list of personality traits from the Brand Personality Scale developed by Aaker (1997) will be given. Participants will be able to select from all of the 42 traits identified by Aaker (1997).

Survey Section 2

The second part of the survey will measure hypothesis 3. The participants will be shown the same logo in a given color the same as in the first section of the survey, but this time they will be also provided with a description of the brand. The description contained two brand personality terms derived from the personality traits defined by Aaker (1997). The two personality terms are from the same dimension and will be either congruent with the color or not congruent with the color associations. The incongruent colors will be randomly chosen. Participants will be asked to rate the appropriateness of the color choice for the logo on a 7- point Likert scale (1 = highly inappropriate, 7= highly appropriate).

Color Blindness Measure

In order to make sure participants are able to accurately view the colors in the survey, a color vision test will be applied. If participants do not pass the color vision test, they would not be able to access the rest of the survey. The color vision test asks participants to identify a picture within a series of colored dots. The image used for the color vision test will be taken from Dr. Kalmus's (1965) book about defective color vision as used previously in the color research tests at the University of Missouri (Ridgway 2011).

Demographic Questions

A set of demographic questions will be included in the survey to gain a better understanding of the samples characteristics. Participants will be required to be 18 years of age or older. Other demographic questions will ask the highest level of education completed, age, and gender. Many of the original survey's demographic questions will be removed to focus on the primary data including religious, ethnic, and racial groups.

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

The method of sampling used will be snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961). Snowball sampling is named for the process it uses to accrue participants. In the first stage of snowball sampling, a small sample is contacted to participate in the survey. From there, each individual is then asked to recommend others to participate and this is repeated until an adequate sample size is achieved.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1-3 are based off of the previous studies done by Masters Student Jessica Ridgway at the University of Missouri on color association with branding. The same construct will be used for this experiment except the process will be updated to be more accurate by developing a better sample, having exact color calibration, and most importantly, conducting hypothesis 4 where the role of web versus print is determined.

Hypothesis 1: A chi-square test will be used to identify whether the proportion of participants selecting a color association for the logo (i.e., blue, green, pink, red, yellow, and purple) significantly differed from each other. The chi-square test will be chosen because the data collected is categorical rather than continuous and the data will be not normally distributed.

Hypothesis 2: Descriptive statistics will be used to analyze hypothesis two. Frequencies and percentages will be used to analyze which of the 42 personality traits derived from Aaker (1997) will be applied to each colored logo. Personality traits that are selected by more than thirty percent of participants will be examined to determine the fit within the five dimensions (i.e., sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness) defined by Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale.

Hypothesis 3: To test hypothesis three two separate chi-square tests will be performed. This is because of reverse coding that will be done with the pink and purple variables. Pink and purple will be randomly selected to have incongruent color associations and brand description. The chi-square test will be again chosen because the data will not be normally distributed and required the use of a non-parametric test. A chi-square test will be used to identify whether the proportion of participants selecting color appropriateness for the logo (i.e., blue, green, pink, red, yellow, and purple) significantly differed from each other. The data will be collected using a 7-point Likert scale, so those responses that indicated a 5 or above will be considered appropriate and those responses 4 and below will be considered inappropriate. The data will be coded into categorical data forming two groups; appropriate and inappropriate.

Hypothesis 4: To test hypothesis four, all of the results will be compared from Hypothesis tests 1-3 for both the web and print versions of the survey and then determined, via a Pearson correlation test, if there is a correlation between the results of the web and print versions of the study. If there is a correlation, we will fail to reject the null hypothesis. If there is no significant correlation, we will reject the null hypothesis and assume there is a significant difference between consumer's color perception of web and print content.

Results

Description of the Sample

A total of 130 web participants and 25 print participants were collected for the purpose of this study. Overall, after depicting the data, only 94 of the web surveys were credible for use and 20 of the print surveys due to incomplete information. This still served as a sufficient amount of data to receive valuable feedback to test and determine whether to reject or confirm the stated hypotheses. The demographics were relatively narrow and did not cover as near of a wide enough range as would be preferred for more insight into the variables of consumer perception. There were 78% female subjects to 22% male. The overwhelming majority (91%) was in the 18-24 age range with the rest being 25-54 years old. Almost 90% of the subjects were Caucasian with 4.5% of African American and Hispanic subjects and one Asian subject. As far as education and its impact on the study, the majority of the subjects were currently enrolled in "some college" (67%) and 15% with only high school diploma. Very few were graduates or master's candidates. There was also deemed to be insufficient data to determine the influence of studying marketing or graphic communications compared to the choices of other consumers.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1. A chi-square test was used to identify whether the proportion of participants selecting a color association for the logo (i.e., blue, green, pink, red, yellow, and purple) significantly differed from each other. The chi-square test was chosen because the data collected is categorical rather than continuous, and the data was not normally distributed. Consistent with the first null hypothesis, the majority of participants chose the color association that is most widely accepted as the association for that particular color. The null hypothesis was correct for four of the six colors, but was rejected in two instances. There were some major differences in the collected results although that differed from previous research done by JL Ridgeway and others. For instance, the selections for red were not statistically significant compared to in the past where “passionate” was the significantly chosen trait matching with Aaker’s theory. According to the results, there is not sufficient evidence to determine a definite brand personality association for the color red. Purple also is displayed to be not statistically significant as well. The most frequently chosen association was with the word “justice” instead of “playful” as in the previously performed studies. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is correct for the color red and purple having different color associations from the established theories. The data can be seen in the figure below.

Color Associations Chi Squared Results
Results of Chi-Square Analysis

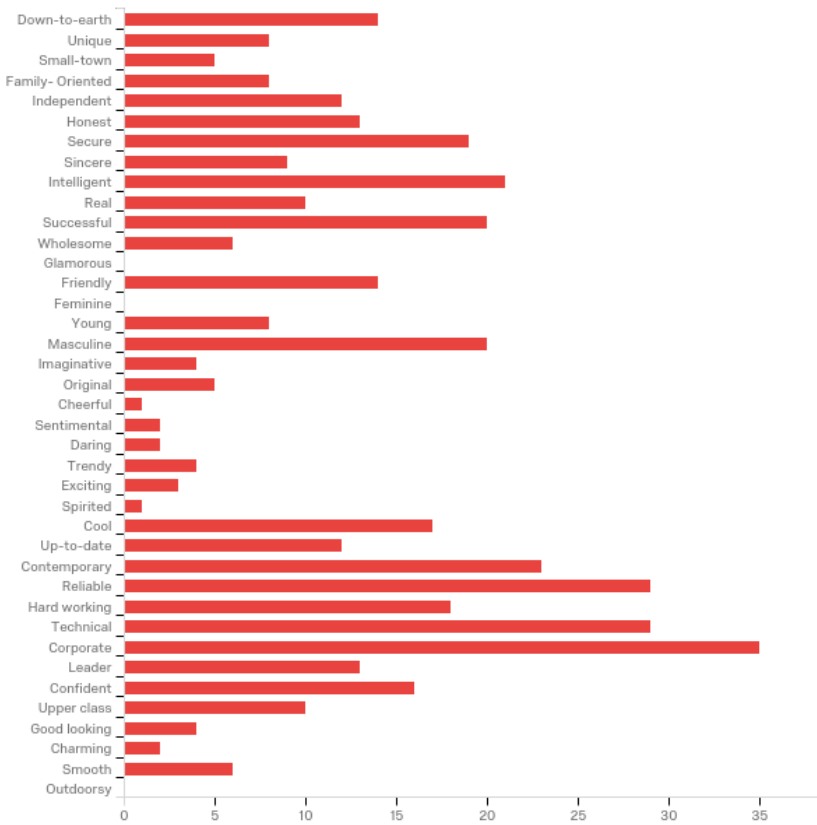
Color and Significant Association	<i>n</i> <i>frequency</i>	Percent %	N	df	χ^2	<i>p</i>
<u>Blue</u>						
Trustworthy	74	78.7%	94	4	206.532	.000
Warm	1					
Happy	5					
Energetic	2					
Playful	12					
<u>Green</u>						
Healthy	61	64.9%	94	3	89.234	.000
Protective	22					
Passionate	1					
Dynamic	10					
Exciting	0					
<u>Pink</u>						
Fun	68	72.3%	94	3	104.711	.000
Trustworthy	1					
Passionate	24					
Prestigious	0					
Reliable	1					
<u>Red</u>						
Passionate	28	29.8%	94	4	.170	.680
Justice	15					
Secure	25					
Energetic	18					
Stable	8					
<u>Yellow</u>						
Energetic	81	86.2%	94	4	231.157	.000
Trustworthy	3					
Secure	2					
Healthy	5					
Protective	3					
<u>Purple</u>						
Justice	30	31.9%	94	4	.925	.336
Secure	11					
Playful	23					
Stable	21					
Fun	9					

The color association with the highest percentage is listed as it is the association that differs the most from the other association.

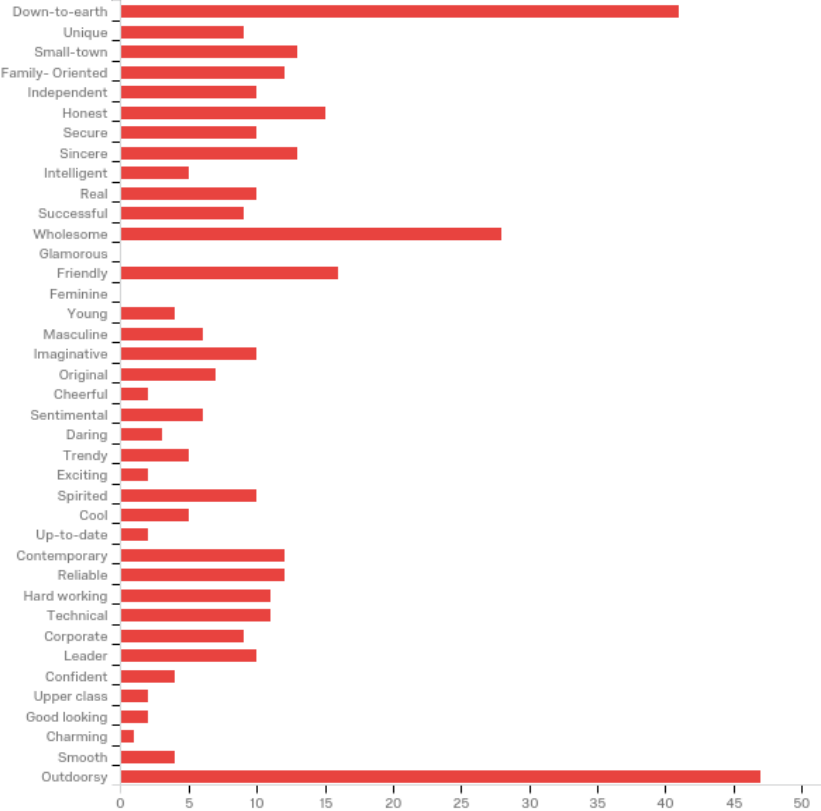
Hypothesis 2. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze hypothesis two. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze which of the 42 personality traits derived from Aaker (1997) were applied to each colored logo. Personality traits that were selected by more than thirty percent of participants were examined to determine the fit within the five dimensions (i.e., sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness) defined by Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale. The blue had very interesting and somewhat expected results as many various traits were selected in the samples across the different personality types. Overall, the majority of the traits fell into the category of "competence" with a surprising amount being in the "excitement" category as well which goes against previous theories and experiments. Green was also relatively diverse from previous suggestions being mostly sincerity personality traits with some elements of ruggedness. Pink displayed results to be expected overall fitting into the sophistication category along with some aspects of excitement and sincerity oddly enough. Red also fell into the category of "competence" which was to be expected more for blue more so than red, and also exhibited significantly less traits of excitement than blue. Yellow was close to 100% traits of excitement which was the predicted category. Purple displayed a wide mix of traits between competence, excitement, and sophistication. More information would need to be gathered to determine what makes consumers capable of seeing a color as having multiple personalities.

Brand Color Personality Traits Results

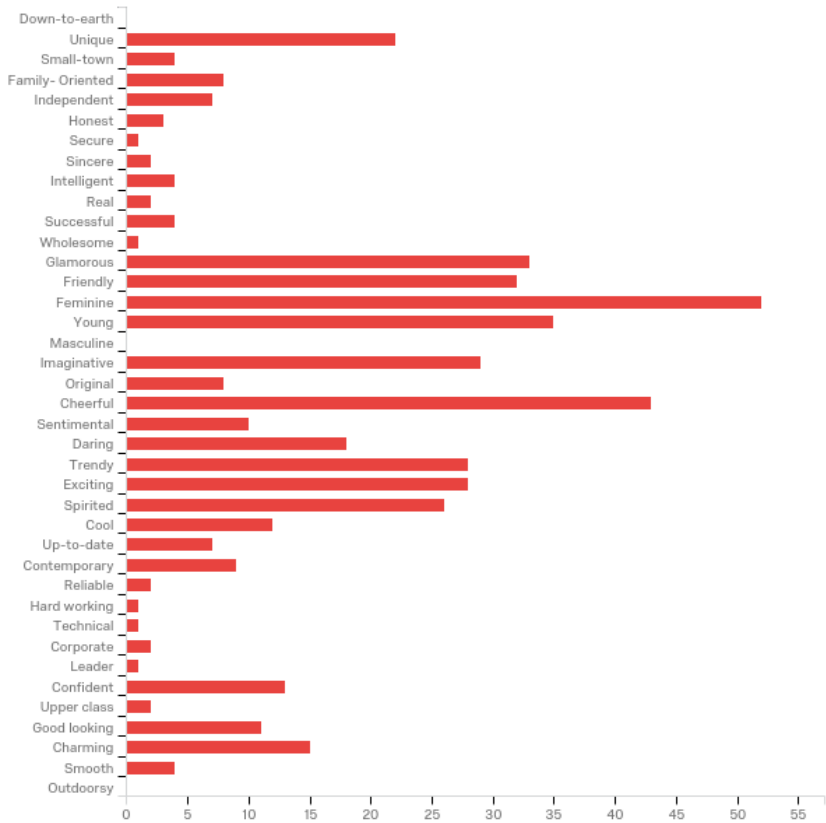
Blue



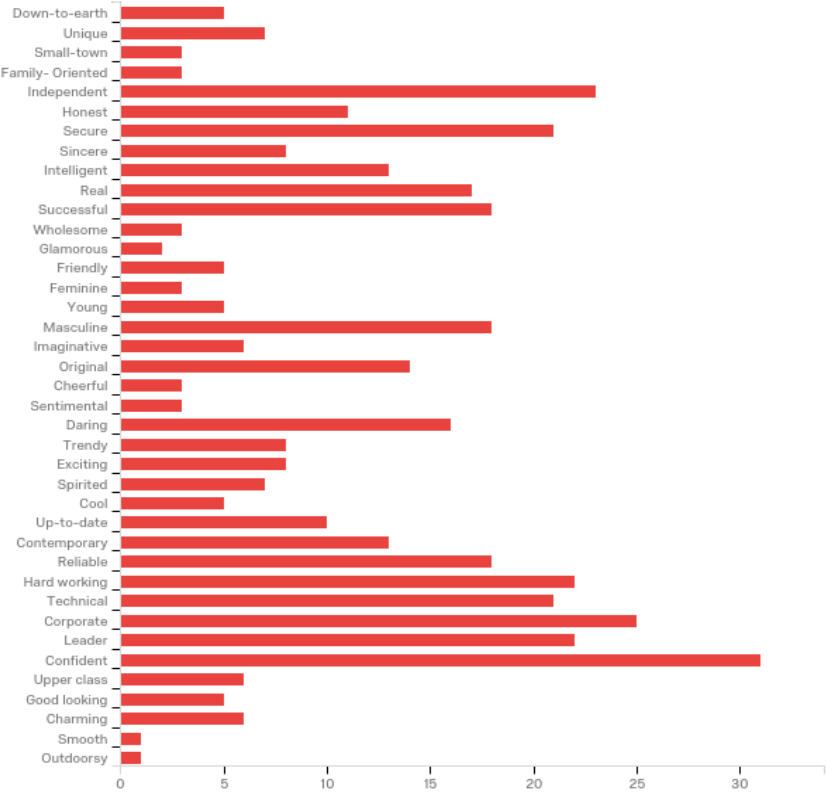
Green



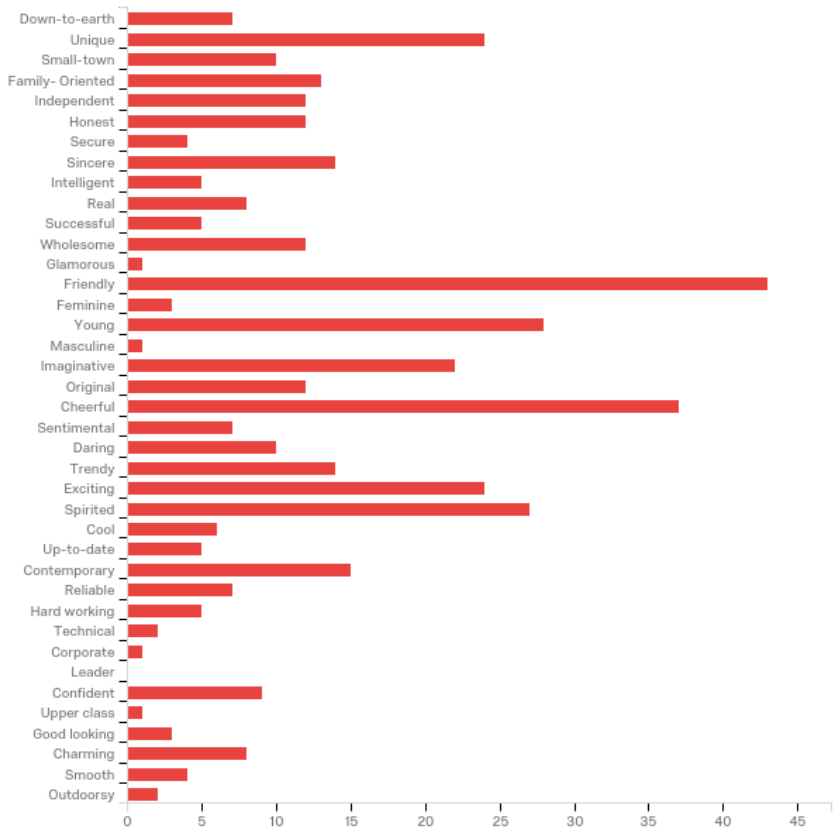
Pink



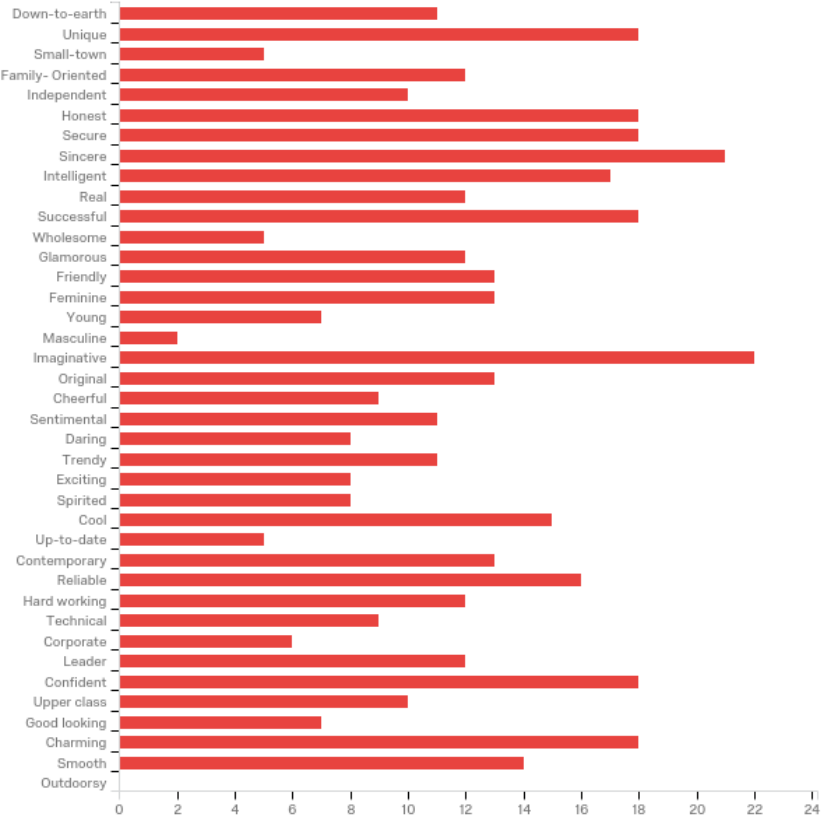
Red



Yellow



Purple



Hypothesis 3. To test hypothesis three two separate chi-square tests were performed (see Table 4.4). This is because of reverse coding that was done with the pink and purple variables. Pink and purple were randomly selected to have incongruent color associations and brand description. The chi-square test was again chosen because the data was not normally distributed and required the use of a non-parametric test. A chi-square test was used to identify whether the proportion of participants selecting color appropriateness for the logo (i.e., blue, green, pink, red, yellow, and purple) significantly differed from each other. The data was collected using a 7-point Likert scale, so those responses that indicated a 5 or above were considered appropriate and those responses 4 and below were considered inappropriate. The data was coded into categorical data forming two groups; appropriate and inappropriate. The results conveyed that the the color associations were statistically significant for some, but not for all of the colors. In the first hypothesis test, there were conflicting results for the color red and purple. In this test, red once again as well as yellow were deemed to be statistically insignificant by the Chi Squared test. There was almost a fifty-fifty split between the percentages of people who deemed the color red to be appropriate for an exciting and daring brand. Yellow showed closer to a sixty-forty split for being appropriate for a cheerful and friendly brand. This gives us further incentive into the idea that red is not truly perceived to be as exciting and bold of a color as deemed by previous associative theory. The reverse coding for pink and purple provided expected results of inappropriateness, and the rest of the colors were selected to fit well with their associated brand type.

Color Appropriateness Chi Squared Results

Results of Chi-Square Analysis determining appropriateness

Color and brand description	<i>n</i> <i>frequency</i>	Percent %	N	df	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Blue						
<i>Honest and Sincere</i>			67	1	16.254	.000
Appropriate	50	74.6%				
Inappropriate	17	25.4%				
Green						
<i>Down to earth and wholesome</i>			67	1	30.224	.000
Appropriate	56	62.7%				
Inappropriate	11	37.3%				
Pink						
<i>Masculine and tough</i>			67	1	48.493	.000
Appropriate	5	7.5%				
Inappropriate	62	92.5%				
Red						
<i>Exciting and daring</i>			67	1	.134	.714
Appropriate	35	52.2%				
Inappropriate	32	47.8%				
Yellow						
<i>Cheerful and friendly</i>			67	4	3.358	.067
Appropriate	41	61.2%				
Inappropriate	26	38.8%				
Purple						
<i>Small-town and sentimental</i>			67	4	20.433	.000
Appropriate	15	22.4%				

Hypothesis 4. The results for each of the other three hypotheses when put into a print format for twenty- five subjects to be surveyed portrayed similar statistical results to that of the digital results except for one primary factor. The color red that was seen in the 1st and 3rd digital hypothesis test to have intriguing results did not return the same results for the print editions. The results for red in the print samples conveyed that the null hypothesis was still in fact true. Red was viewed in hypothesis 1 to be statistically significant ($p < .001$) for the passionate trait. This was due to the fact there was a larger range between the number of people who selected passionate and secure compared to with the digital test. Hypothesis 3 also differed as energetic was the primary personality type that the selected traits fell into which was also typical with the null hypothesis. Other than this difference, the remainder of the results matched up with that of the digital tests. The key information that can be taken away is that possibly the color associations established are more prone to be followed and perceived by consumers on a print medium compared to digitally; at least with the color red.

Conclusions

Overall, the experiment was successful in obtaining valuable information that can be used across a variety of marketing and branding platforms to better match companies with their ideal customers by using design and color principles that not only can be identified, but identified with on a conscious level. The population could have had more variety in order to get a better understanding of the results that were obtained, especially the results that contradicted the theories of Aaker, Ridgeway, and other previous researchers. The data gathered was still managed in a successful manner that allowed new information that was not previously seen in studies to come to light. The evidence from each of the tests shows that there is certainly a difference between people's perceptions of what personality a color portrays to them for some colors more than others. Blue, purple, and most especially red relay different ideas and appeal to different types of people. They are far from limited to a conventional color theory as marketers have suggested for decades now. Brands need to not take such theories as a rule of law, but more as a rule of thumb. Applying this similar research style to a target market could easily provide companies with results in the future for the correct color schemes to use in their creative work to produce the highest equity.

The idea that consumers could truly view brand personality differently web and print mediums could be extremely impactful on marketing strategies. If a color is interpreted to mean something different to a person on a package or print advertisement than it does on a digital platform, then more thought and strategy will have to be placed into determining multiple brand color schemes that convey

the correct messages and personality to the consumers in each method. This aspect was the main purpose behind the continuation of this study following the ideas of J.L. Ridgway's previous research and applying it to other elements of brand exposure.

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