



## Understanding Color And Its Emotional Application On Audience Through The Lens Of Wong Kar Wai.

Aryan<sup>1</sup>, Anisa<sup>2</sup>, Ayush K. Singh<sup>3</sup>, Vinay S. Rawat<sup>4</sup>, Ananda Karmakar<sup>5</sup>

School of Visual Arts, Graphic Era Hill University  
M. Sc Animation and Multimedia

### ABSTRACT :

This study focused on the relationship of color and emotions through the film scenes of Wong Kar Wai and how they evoke emotions. A short literature review outlined the significant influence of color in the films of Wong Kar Wai, which suggests the strength of colors in evoking emotions and feelings. Further on building on these foundational data gathered from literature review, A survey was conducted among 60 professional designers, film scholars, students and filmmakers, who were shown film scenes and sequences color graded heavily into tones of Yellow, Green and Red from selected Wong Kar Wai movies. The respondents chose the emotion they highly resonated in those scenes and sequences from five options given which were: desire, joy, anger, sorrow, or fear. A significant association between color and emotion was found in the results of the overall chi-square test for independence:  $\chi^2 = (8, N = 521) = 218.72, p < 0.001$ . Scenes with yellow tones tends to be related more to "Desire and Admiration", Green to "Anger and Rage" and Red to "Joy and Happiness". Further researches could pick up from this research by considering more or different variables which could be influential in evoking emotions and feelings like more colors and emotions or culture, regions, time and other such aspects in the context of color and its ability to influence emotions.

**Keywords:** Color, Emotion, Film, Chi-square test and Wong Kar Wai.

### Introduction.

For more than a century color has been an integral part of 'Motion Picture Films'. It is not there to just make the film more aesthetically pleasing to the eye but to carry some essential emotions and meanings in the story and deliver it to audience as described by 'Shohini Chaudhuri' (2016) Color grading plays a crucial role in shaping the emotional impact of a film on its audience (Chaudhuri, 2016). Color has a significant effect on people's psychological process of visualizing certain meanings around our world. Different colors leaves different visual impacts within our conscious which further develops and evokes emotions for a visual narrative (Conway, 2012). According to *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* (1890) People experience great delight in color, generally. The eye requires it as much as it requires light. We have only to remember the refreshing sensation we experience, if on a cloudy day the sun illuminates a single portion of the scene before us and displays its colors. That healing powers were ascribed to colored gems, may have arisen from the experience of this indefinable pleasure. The use of color enhances the psychological aspects of characters' feelings and desires in the film, primarily acting as a symbolic and representational element (Chen, 2022). From this perspective, colors in films are usually symbolic, serving to express the emotions of characters, unveil the film's theme, establish a particular mood and aesthetic, or function as a transitional element.

Color Grading helps to achieve the final output, that feel and look which the director or the story itself require to portray and express a certain meaning story wants to deliver to the audience. *Wong Kar Wai* a Hong Kong based Screenwriter, Producer and globally renowned Director is our study's benchmark. Wong is well known and critically celebrated for his unique use of color in his storytelling that influences both the visual and emotional aspects of his films. His distinctive approach to color is a defining element in his film-making style evoking emotions and contributing significantly to the creation of mood, atmosphere, and narrative depth in his works.(Wang, 2023).

A well versed told story in cinema is often critiqued on its technical terms, over looking the value of color grading and color's impact at the final output, to ensure the practical viability of color's influence over emotion and feelings of a story in films of Wong Kar Wai; this research aims to shed light on the role of color in cinema and how it creates an emotional/psychological impact on viewers, keeping Wong Kar Wai's distinct works and his signature style of usage of color as the vantage point. Current study focuses on the respect of understanding color and its emotional impact on audience through the lens of Wong Kar Wai.

We analyzed chosen films by Wong Kar Wai like "*As Tears Go By*"(1988), "*Chungking Express*" (1994), "*Fallen Angels*" (1995), "*Happy Together*" (1997) and "*In the Mood for Love*" (2000) to explore and understand the significance of color grading, a crucial yet frequently unnoticed storytelling element in movies, conducted a survey among professional graphic artists, film scholars and students to gather data and opted to process it with the help of '*Chi square Independence test*' to examine the relationship between color and emotions. It is hypothesized that color plays an important role in Wong Kar Wai films to evoke specific emotions and feelings. Through the lens and chromatic worlds of Wong Kar Wai, this study seeks to enhance our understanding of color and its importance on creating psychological and emotional landscapes, acting as a visual gateway to understanding the meaning within a film and art. The structure of this paper is as follows: the next section reviewed available literature on 'Color and its Impact on Wong Kar Wai's

Storytelling, further on third section presented the research methodology, followed by the fourth section, which discussed the findings, The study concludes with the final section.

### ***Emotional Impact of Color in Cinematic Storytelling.***

The emotional influence that color has in narration of a movie contributes a lot more than it is credited for, it significantly influence the audience's perception and engagement with the narrative. According to author and filmmaker Itten(1973), "Colours are forces, radiant energies that affect us positively or negatively, whether we are aware of it or not" (Itten, 1973).



**Figure 1.1** Screenshots from *"In the Mood for Love"*.

This emotional application of color in cinema becomes particularly evident in the works of Wong Kar Wai, where colors are meticulously used to arouse specific feelings and enhance the narrative's emotional depth, like in "In the Mood for Love", the primary use of red color conveys a sense of passion and desire while the green tones denote envy and melancholic longing, effectively immersing the viewers in the bittersweet romance portrayed on screen (Chen, 2022). In "Fallen Angels," Wong Kar Wai uses a blue filter at certain points making the atmosphere of film feel cold and dark, reflecting the film's themes of loneliness and gloomy plus deserted aspects of city life. The blue filter enhances the film's cool atmosphere and establishes a unique visual look (Wang,2023). Colors have been linked to specific emotional responses due to their perceptual properties and cultural associations (Floridou, 2022). As Wong Kar Wai himself once stated, "Colors speak louder than words; they have the ability to convey emotions and evoke memories." (Ciment, 2005). Colors possess their own unique communication, capable of visually shaping a character's development or enriching a narrative (Bellantoni, 2005). Color's capability to manipulate emotions and feelings has been proven in numerous studies. Its also well established that through the masterful use of color-grading, filmmakers can evoke specific moods and feelings in the audience (Berens, 2014).

## Methodology.

This research is focused upon analyzing color's psychological influence on audience while they watch a film, which would further establish if color helps to improve the storytelling experience in film or not. To find concrete evidence in relation of color and its influence on depicting emotions a survey had been conducted among 60 professional 'Graphic Artists', 'Film Scholars' and 'Students' who have an extensive working experience in fields of Designing, Filmmaking and studying various domains in Art of filmmaking and design.

The Questionnaire was divided into three section, each focusing on a particular color 'Yellow', 'Green' and 'Red' respectively. Each section had three scenes and sequences from different Wong Kar Wai movies, these scenes and sequences were chosen on the basis of particular color heavily graded in these scenes, showcasing the colors all three sections represents. Participants had five emotions as options to choose from which they tend to feel from the showcased scene or sequence. These given emotions are "Desire and Admiration", "Joy and Happiness", "Anger and Rage", "Sorrow and Sadness"

**Green.**

*As Tears Go By (1988) Green.*



From the video shown above, what emotion do you resonate with the most?

- Desire and Admiration.
- Joy and Happiness.
- Anger and Rage.
- Sorrow and Sadness.
- Fear and Horror.

and "Fear and Horror". Here's one of the question from the questionnaire for a better understanding:

A "Chi Square Independence Test" was opted to analyze the data collected from the survey to calculate the relationship between colors and emotions they evoke as it helps to determine any significant association between two categorical variables (in our case, color and emotion).

## Result and Findings.

A Chi-square test for independence was conducted to examine the relationship between the color of the film scene and the emotions felt by the 60 participants of the survey. Chi-square statistic is calculated using the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

Table 1 shows the observed frequencies from the survey results.

**Table 1**

Emotion	Yellow.	Green.	Red.
<i>Desire &amp; Admiration.</i>	76	23	23
<i>Joy &amp; Happiness.</i>	39	11	90
<i>Anger &amp; Rage.</i>	10	82	14
<i>Sorrow &amp; Sadness.</i>	39	38	42
<i>Fear &amp; Horror.</i>	4	20	10

The expected frequency for each cell in the contingency table is calculated using the formula:

$$E_{ij} = \frac{(\text{row total of cell } i)(\text{column total of cell } j)}{\text{grand total}}$$

and the degrees of freedom(df) for the test are calculated as:

$$df = (\text{number of rows} - 1) \times (\text{number of columns} - 1)$$

Therefore, with the Chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between the color of the film scene and the emotions felt by the volunteers. The results showed a significant association between color and emotion,

$$\chi^2 = (8, N = 521) = 218.72, p < 0.001.$$

The observed and expected frequencies for each color-emotion combination are presented in the table 2 below:

**Table 2**

Color	Desire (O/E)	Joy (O/E)	Anger (O/E)	Sorrow (O/E)	Fear (O/E)
<b>Yellow</b>	76/39.34	39/45.14	10/34.18	39/38.37	4/10.96
<b>Green</b>	23/40.74	11/46.76	82/35.40	38/39.74	20/11.36
<b>Red</b>	23/41.92	90/48.10	14/36.42	42/40.88	10/11.68

Since the p-value is extremely small, these results suggests that the color a film scene or a sequence of a Wong Kar Wai film is graded into leaves a significant impact on the emotions experienced by the participants. Yellow colored scenes were mostly associated with “Desire and Admiration”, Green colored scenes showcased loads of “Anger and Rage” feels to audience and Red heavily influenced audience to feel “Joy and Happiness” off of its scenes. These findings support the hypothesis that color in Wong Kar Wai films is a powerful tool and evokes specific emotional responses.

## Conclusion.

This Study focused to explore color and its emotional application on the audience through the lens of Wong Kar Wai films. Results of processing the data collected from a survey stated that color has a significant impact on emotional responses by the audience and it can generate particular emotion which can enrich the storytelling experience further more. These findings have important implications for researchers, students, aspiring filmmakers and designers to gain insights and strategically utilize this information to enhance emotional impact in their work with colors and produce a more engaging and emotionally resonant experience for the audience.

Future studies can build on these results and explore a wider variety of colors, emotions and filmmaker, considering differences like culture, region, time and other circumstances which can influence people’s perception for color. Understanding these nuances of human psychology and how it can be influenced by design aspects like color, shape, form, line, texture, space and typography can further refine the art of design and for this case filmmaking.

In conclusion this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on color and its psychological effects on viewers, offering pragmatic insights for filmmakers, visual artists, designers and other artists looking to harness the emotional power of color in their work.

## REFERENCES :

1. Bellantoni, Patti (2005). *If It's Purple, Someone's Gonna Die: The Power of Color in Visual Storytelling*. Routledge, New York.
2. Berens, Daniel James (2014). *THE ROLE OF COLOUR IN FILMS: INFLUENCING THE AUDIENCE'S MOOD*. Northern Film School, Leeds Metropolitan University.
3. Chaudhuri, Shohini (2016). "Color Design in the Cinema of Wong Kar-Wai." In *A Companion to Wong Kar-Wai*, edited by Martha P. Nochimson, 153–181. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. doi:10.1002/9781118425589.ch6.
4. Chen, Changhai (2022). *Examining the Colour Imagery in Film-Wong Kar wai's 1960s trilogy*. *Frontiers in Art Research*, Francis Academy Press, doi: [10.25236/FAR.2022.040213](https://doi.org/10.25236/FAR.2022.040213).
5. Conway BR (2012). Color consilience: color through the lens of art practice, history, philosophy, and neuroscience. *Ann N Y Acad Sci*, doi: 10.1111/j.1749-6632.2012.06470.x.
6. Floridou GA, Peerdeman KJ, Schaefer RS (2022). Individual differences in mental imagery in different modalities and levels of intentionality. *Mem Cognit*, doi: 10.3758/s13421-021-01209-7.
7. Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von (1840). *Theory of Colours*. Translated and Notes by Charles Lock Eastlake. Cambridge University Press. Page 276-306.
8. Ciment, Gilles (2005), "Interview with Wong Kar-wai." In *Wong Kar-wai*, edited by Peter Brunette, 123–133. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
9. Itten, J. (1961). *The art of color: the subjective experience and objective rationale of color*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
10. Wang, Chenlinyng (2023). A Study of Film Aesthetics of Wong Kar-wai --Taking "Fallen Angels" as an Example. *CHR Vol. 21: 72-77*. DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/21/20231418. doi: 10.54254/2753-7064/21/20231418.