



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Impact of Color Psychology on Clothing Brand Perception Among Generation Z Consumers.

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Abstract-

This research delves into the influence of color psychology on how Generation Z consumers perceive clothing brands, a digitally literate and trend-driven group that wields considerable power in the fashion market. Color is not just visual; it's emotive and psychologically charged, influencing consumer perception, brand affinity, and interaction. The aim of this study is to clarify how various colors affect emotions, push buyers to make purchases, and build brand loyalty in the Gen Z market.

Employing a mixed-method approach, the research gathered primary data via online surveys of 100 Gen Z participants and examined secondary data from available branding strategies of prominent clothing brands. The results indicate that color is a crucial factor in first impressions, emotional connections, and brand trust. Gen Z consumers are extremely sensitive to colors representing identity, mood, and values like sustainability, luxury, or minimalism.

The study points out that regular application of color throughout branding channels reinforces recognition and consumer trust. It also stresses the need to recognize cultural and gender-based differences in color perception since these determine how Gen Z engages with fashion brands on an emotional level.

The research concludes that color psychology is an effective way of branding and that clothing brands must spend money on consumer research so they can use colors that meet the expectations and demands of their consumers. Through using emotional triggers and visual consistency, brands can increase their attractiveness and increase loyalty among Gen Z consumers

Introduction

Color is an influential device in forming perception, particularly when applied to branding and marketing. For fashion brands, the visual identity formed through color is essential to capture and retain consumers. For Generation Z—people born during the mid-1990s to early 2010s—this power is stronger given their high level of visual literacy and heavy consumption of digital media. Gen Z consumers differ from past generations because they respond better to designs and aesthetics that suit their identity, moods, and personal values. Thus, color psychology emerged as an essential strategy used in shaping their perceptions and interaction towards fashion brands.

Color psychology is a term that applies to the exploration of the way colors influence people's behavior and decision-making. Within the world of fashion, certain colors have the power to induce specific emotions or meanings—such as being trustworthy and connoting blue, energy and red, or green and sustainable. Such color signals become part of the general brand personality and positioning that Gen Z shoppers typically check prior to a purchase. With their affinity for authenticity, openness, and individuality, Gen Z's understanding of a brand is highly tied to the color scheme of a brand and whether it embodies these values.

This research investigates the influence of color psychology in developing clothing brand impressions among Generation Z. Through a consideration of the role of color in evoking emotional reactions, brand attitudes, and purchasing decisions, this study seeks to identify effective branding tactics that appeal to this active and powerful consumer generation.

Statement of Problem

In spite of the established impact of color psychology on marketing, most fashion brands do not match their color options with the emotional values and tastes of Generation Z. This tends to result in poor emotional connections, lower trust, and low brand loyalty among this visually oriented consumer segment.

Brands often take on generic color trends without considering their psychological effect on Gen Z, leading to brand identities that are irrelevant and inauthentic. Additionally, there is minimal academic research examining how certain color combinations influence Gen Z's perception of brand identity, trust, and purchase intentions within the fashion sector.

The lack of data-driven research deprives marketers of definitive answers on how best to leverage color in branding and packaging to make an impact with Gen Z in terms of early impressions and future engagement. Plugging this information gap is important to creating more emotionally engaging and visually impactful branding strategies.

Objectives of The Study.

1. To explore the emotional and psychological effects of colors in fashion branding.
2. To assess how color impacts Generation Z's buying behavior and brand loyalty.
3. To identify how clothing brands use color psychology in their marketing strategies.

Review of Literature

Color is a strong non-verbal communication that has a huge impact on consumer attitudes and actions. In marketing, color psychology has been used to influence brand identity, purchasing decisions, emotional involvement, and general brand attitude. This review of literature combines evidence from three primary scholarly sources to analyze the impact of color on consumer behavior, with an emphasis on its meaning for brand identity, buying behavior, cultural differences, and marketing in digital and physical environments. These sources are Casas and Chinoperekweyi (2019), Maghraby et al. (2024), and Choudhury and Batra (2016).

Color psychology examines the ways in which various colors bring about certain emotional and cognitive reactions, driving consumer choice. Casas and Chinoperekweyi (2019) explain how warm colors like red and orange cause excitement and a sense of urgency, while cool colors like blue and green promote trust and calmness—principles widely employed in branding and retail. Maghraby et al. (2024) build upon this theory with the addition of associative learning, in which color preference is defined by individual and cultural experience. Choudhury and Batra (2016) elaborate on this by asserting that perception of color is dependent on cultural, situational, and personality-based influences, highlighting the subjective nature of the color response. Color is central in the creation of brand identity and recognition. Casas and Chinoperekweyi (2019) cite that 62–90% of first impressions regarding products are just from color alone, showing its significant importance in brand recall. Maghraby et al. (2024) similarly observe that color can bring up to 80% improvement in brand recognition, showing how emblematic brands establish emotional connection through the consistent application of color—like Coca-Cola's red. Choudhury and Batra (2016) emphasize the need for congruence between brand personality and color, cautioning that incongruous color combinations can lead to cognitive dissonance and decreased consumer trust.

Colour affects not only perceptions of a brand, but also consumer behavior. Casas and Chinoperekweyi (2019) say that colour is capable of influencing perceived quality, value, and even taste—gold and silver packaging, for instance, signals high-end products. Maghraby et al. (2024) write about how shop spaces painted with warm colours are more likely to trigger impulse buys, while cooler colours are more likely to trigger consideration. Choudhury and Batra (2016) contribute experimental data showing how color affects willingness to pay and perceived attractiveness. Their findings also highlight gender-based differences in color preferences, which can guide market segmentation and product design.

Demographic and cultural factors highly influence color perception. Casas and Chinoperekweyi (2019) describe that whereas red has a positive connotation in China, it is associated with warning or danger in Western cultures—suggesting culturally sensitive branding. Maghraby et al. (2024) discuss demographic trends, commenting that children like bright, primary colors, while adults prefer darker shades. Choudhury and Batra (2016) describe the phenomenon of "color schema," whereby childhood experiences influence color associations in later life. This research emphasizes the need to tailor color strategies by age, sex, and cultural background.

As consumer behavior moves online, it is becoming more important to know how color works across media. Casas and Chinoperekweyi (2019) note that color schemes on websites affect user experience, readability, and conversion rates. Maghraby et al. (2024) note how the color of call-to-action buttons affects engagement in online shopping, citing that high-contrast colors such as red and orange can generate higher rates of interaction. Choudhury and Batra (2016) concentrate on product photography and presentation online, stating that faithful and identical color representation in physical and digital formats is essential in order to sustain trust, especially in fashion and lifestyle sectors.

The findings of these studies provide actionable recommendations for marketers seeking to engage with Generation Z. Casas and Chinoperekweyi (2019) suggest A/B testing color palettes and taking emotional reactions into account along the customer journey. Maghraby et al. (2024) stress matching color to brand personality and demographics, as well as cultural sensitivity. Choudhury and Batra (2016) propose consistency in product design, packaging, and promotional materials to reinforce brand identity and stand out in competitive markets.

Taken together, these researches show that color is a versatile, dynamic instrument of consumer marketing. From shaping the perception of brand identity to informing purchases and negotiating cultural values, color is a prime mover of consumer behavior. In the face of the ongoing transformation of the fashion industry, particularly among Generation Z consumers, future studies need to examine how new technologies such as AI and AR can advance the use of color psychology in branding campaigns.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-method approach, combining consumer surveys with case study analysis to examine how color psychology influences clothing brand perception. The survey collects data on consumer preferences, emotions, and buying behavior, particularly in response to color use in branding. Case studies of brands like Nike, Chanel, and H&M further explore how color schemes are applied in real-world marketing to influence consumer engagement.

Research Questions

- 1. How does color psychology influence consumers’ purchase decisions?
- 2. How do consumers associate brand perception with color use in products and marketing?
- 3. To what extent do color schemes affect brand personality perception among Generation Z?

Data Collection

- 1. **Primary Data:** Collected via online surveys using multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions, targeting Generation Z consumers. The aim is to understand how color influences perceptions of brand trust, identity, and purchase intent.
- 2. **Secondary Data:** Derived from case studies, brand campaigns, and existing literature, focusing on how major clothing brands use color in branding to influence consumer behavior.

Sample Population

The study targets 100 Generation Z respondents (born 1997–2012), a visually-driven and trend-aware group. The sample is diverse in terms of gender, culture, and shopping habits, providing relevant insights into how Gen Z interacts with color-based branding across digital platforms.

Data Analysis

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to interpret survey responses and analyze case studies. Quantitative Analysis was conducted on survey data from 100 Generation Z respondents using percentage analysis, mean scores, and correlation. Graphs and charts were utilized for visual representation of patterns in color perception, emotional impact, and brand trust. Qualitative Analysis focused on case studies of brands like Nike, Chanel, and H&M, examining their use of color in logos, campaigns, and overall branding to establish consumer perception and market positioning.

Survey Findings and Interpretation

- 1. Demographics:
90.6% of respondents were aged 18–24, validating Gen Z as the focus demographic.
Gender distribution was relatively balanced (53.7% female, 46.3% male), allowing for diverse perspectives.
- 2. Color Preferences and Brand Associations:
Blue emerged as the most trusted color (40.4%), reinforcing its link with trust and reliability.
Red (32.7%) and green (21.2%) followed, associated with excitement and calmness, respectively.
59.3% viewed dark tones like navy/charcoal as professional; few considered them outdated.
63% favored soft pastels, particularly for minimalist branding.
56.6% associated bright, contrasting colors with trendiness and modernity.
- 3. Perception of Color in Advertising:
77.8% rated color as moderately to very important in branding, confirming its significant role in visual appeal and engagement. Neutral colors (black, gray, white) made 48.1% feel calm and sophisticated, though 22.2% found them dull.
- 4. Key Takeaways:
Gen Z consumers are attracted to bold, trustworthy, and professional color schemes. Color strongly influences purchase likelihood and brand perception.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis revealed notable patterns between demographics and color perceptions:

Variable Pair	Correlation	Interpretation
Age & Trust in Blue	0.33	Older Gen Z members associate blue with trust.
Age & Perception of Muted Colors	-0.23	Older individuals view muted tones as less trustworthy.
Gender & Brand Trust	-0.09	Minimal influence of gender on trust in brands.
Bright Colors & Trendy Perception	0.28	Bright colors positively linked with trendiness.
Neutral Colors & Purchase Likelihood	0.35	Neutral tones boost purchase intent due to luxury appeal.

These results were supported by boxplot visualizations, confirming the varied influence of emotional responses to color across age and gender segments.

Emotional Triggers and Buying Decisions

Color significantly influences emotions and purchasing behavior:

Red evokes urgency and excitement, ideal for sales and fast fashion.

Blue fosters calmness and trust, suited to denim and classic apparel.

Black represents luxury and sophistication, central to premium fashion branding.

Green signifies sustainability, appealing to eco-conscious buyers.

Consumers subconsciously connect colors with brand values, influencing their trust, loyalty, and purchasing intent. Thus, color becomes a strategic emotional cue in branding.

Brand Color Consistency and Market Positioning

Color consistency reinforces brand identity and strengthens market position. Examples include:

Nike: Consistent use of black and white for power and timeless performance.

Zara: Minimalist black-and-white palette representing elegance and modernity.

H&M: Bright red signals affordability and trend-driven appeal.

Chanel & Gucci: Strong, consistent palettes (e.g., black and white for Chanel; green and red for Gucci) reinforce exclusivity and heritage.

Consistent color usage builds recognition, emotional connection, and customer loyalty—key factors for long-term success in a competitive fashion market.

Conclusion

This study concludes that color psychology is a fundamental element in shaping clothing brand perception, particularly among Generation Z consumers. Far from being mere aesthetic choices, colors carry deep emotional associations that influence consumer trust, interest, and purchase decisions. Strategic use of color enhances a brand's ability to communicate its personality, values, and positioning—often before a single word is read or spoken.

The research confirms that different colors evoke distinct psychological responses. For instance:

- Blue fosters trust and reliability.
- Red ignites excitement and urgency.
- Black and charcoal imply sophistication and professionalism.
- Bright, contrasting colors appeal to trend-conscious, younger consumers.
- Neutral tones are associated with calmness and elegance, while
- Green suggests eco-friendliness and sustainability.

Brands that maintain consistency in color usage across various touchpoints—such as logos, stores, packaging, and digital media—are more likely to be perceived as cohesive, reliable, and recognizable. This consistency builds emotional connections over time and contributes to stronger brand recall and customer loyalty.

In an increasingly competitive and visually driven marketplace, brands that understand and apply the principles of color psychology are better positioned to captivate consumers, influence buying behavior, and sustain long-term brand equity.

Learning Outcomes

1. Understanding Color Perception and Trust

Blue is the most associated color with trust and credibility.

Neutral colors like black, gray, and white evoke professionalism.

Bright colors, while playful and energetic, may reduce perceived seriousness.

2. Demographic Influences

Age: Older individuals prefer muted or neutral tones; younger individuals favor bold and vibrant hues.

Gender: Minimal differences in color perception; however, targeted marketing can still benefit from nuanced preferences.

Culture: Cultural contexts significantly shape color interpretations, making localization important in global branding.

3. Psychological Effects of Color

Muted tones evoke maturity but can seem unapproachable.

Bright colors trigger urgency and attention—ideal for fast fashion.

Pastels connect with calmness and femininity—suitable for beauty or lifestyle segments.

4. Color's Role in Advertising

Emotional response to color influences purchase intent.

Color consistency enhances brand recognition and consumer recall.
Consumers are more engaged with brands that reflect their personal color preferences.

5. Insights for Strategic Branding
Correlation analysis highlights key links between color and brand trust.
A/B testing can help identify the most effective color strategies.
Misaligned color choices can lead to poor engagement and brand disconnect.

Limitations of the Study

1. **Sample Size and Demographic Scope**
The study focused heavily on Generation Z with limited representation across cultures and income groups. Broader generalizability may be constrained.
2. **Subjectivity of Color Perception**
Individual experiences and cultural backgrounds significantly influence how colors are interpreted.
3. **Lack of Real-World or Longitudinal Data**
The study does not include behavioral data over time or actual purchase metrics to validate survey responses.
4. **Interconnected Branding Elements**
The study isolates color, though in reality, typography, logos, and messaging all influence brand perception.
5. **Technological Variability**
Color display may vary across devices and media, possibly affecting respondent interpretations.

Recommendations

1. Conduct Targeted Consumer Research Before Choosing Brand Colors
Businesses should leverage surveys, focus groups, and A/B testing to determine which color palettes align best with their target audience. This ensures color choices are emotionally resonant and brand-appropriate.
2. Account for Cultural and Gender Preferences
Marketers should localize color strategies to suit regional sensibilities. Recognizing gender and cultural nuances in color perception helps avoid miscommunication and enhances brand relevance.
3. Ensure Color Consistency Across All Brand Touchpoints
Maintaining a uniform color scheme in digital and physical channels strengthens brand identity. Consistency increases consumer trust, brand recall, and emotional attachment.
4. Use Color Strategically to Support Brand Personality
Brands should align their primary and accent colors with their values and market positioning—e.g., red for excitement, blue for trust, or black for luxury.
5. Monitor Emerging Color Trends and Consumer Sentiment
Fashion trends evolve quickly. Regularly assessing color effectiveness and adapting palettes based on current consumer preferences can give brands a competitive edge.

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