

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Psychology of Color in Digital Platform Advertising and Dooh (Digital Out-of-Home)

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Abstract

Color is a vital psychological tool in advertising, influencing perception, emotions, and behavior. In digital platform advertising and Digital Out-of-Home (DOOH) media, the creative use of color can capture attention, evoke emotions, and drive consumer decisions within seconds. This paper explores the interplay between color psychology and advertising effectiveness, emphasizing the role of creatives, the importance of the first three seconds in video ads, and the psychological underpinnings of audience engagement. Case studies, expert quotes, and practical recommendations are provided to guide advertisers in leveraging color for maximum impact.

1. Introduction

The human mind processes vast amounts of stimuli daily, making it imperative for advertisers to create campaigns that stand out. Color, as a psychological and emotional trigger, has become a critical element in the success of advertising campaigns. This paper investigates the role of color in digital advertising and DOOH media, focusing on its psychological impact and practical applications in capturing consumer attention and fostering brand engagement. By weaving theoretical insights with real-world applications, the study underscores the profound connection between visual aesthetics and human behavior.

2. Methodology

This study is based on a comprehensive review of existing literature, case studies, and industry insights related to color psychology and advertising. It draws from foundational psychological theories such as B.F. Skinner's behavioral conditioning, emotional contagion theory, and the dual-process theory of cognition. Data from empirical research, expert

commentary, and real-life advertising campaigns enrich the analysis. Key performance indicators (KPIs) like click-through rates (CTR), return on ad spend (ROAS), and user engagement metrics are examined to validate the arguments.

3. Discussion

3.1 The Psychology of Color

Colors are deeply embedded in human psychology, influencing mood, perception, and decision-making. As B.F. Skinner noted in his work on behaviorism, "Environmental stimuli shape behavior," and color is one of the most influential stimuli in advertising. Red, for instance, is associated with urgency and passion, making it ideal for sales promotions. Conversely, blue evokes trust and reliability, often used by financial and technology brands. These associations are not universal and can vary based on cultural and contextual factors, which advertisers must consider when designing campaigns.

Dr. Angela Wright, a renowned color psychologist, posits, "Color communicates on a subconscious level,

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creating emotional responses before the brain has time to rationalize.” Similarly, Karen Haller, an expert in applied color psychology, asserts, “The right color can evoke trust and influence consumer action, while the wrong one can create resistance.” This duality underscores the strategic importance of color choices in advertising.

3.2 The “Yellow and Green War” Coined by Ibeji Ifeoma Isabella

One of the most debated phenomena in color psychology is the “yellow and green war.” Yellow, often linked with optimism and youthfulness, competes with green, which represents growth and stability. Advertisers frequently use these colors to target similar demographics but with varying messages. For example, fast-food brands like McDonald’s lean on yellow for its appetite-inducing properties, while eco-conscious brands favor green to emphasize sustainability.

Dr. Elliot Maier highlights, “While yellow stimulates attention and energy, green appeals to an innate human desire for harmony and balance.” This dichotomy explains why advertisers must carefully match color schemes with brand ethos to avoid dissonance.

3.3 Cultural Influences on Color Perception

Color perception is not universal; it is influenced by cultural, social, and environmental factors. For instance, white is associated with purity and weddings in Western cultures, whereas it symbolizes mourning in many Asian traditions. Similarly, red signifies prosperity and good fortune in China but is linked to danger or warnings in other parts of the world.

Brands operating in global markets must navigate these cultural nuances. Coca-Cola’s global campaigns, for instance, adapt the use of its iconic red branding to local contexts, balancing universal appeal with cultural sensitivity. A deeper understanding of these dynamics allows advertisers to create campaigns that resonate across diverse audiences.

4. The Role of Creatives

Creatives serve as the vehicle through which color psychology impacts audiences. The visual and narrative aspects of advertisements—including color schemes, typography, and imagery—are essential in capturing attention and conveying messages.

- *Importance of the First Three Seconds:* Digital platform metrics reveal that the first three seconds

of a video ad determine its success. Vibrant yellows for optimism or dramatic blacks for sophistication can significantly influence viewer retention. As noted by Dr. Jennifer Aaker of Stanford Graduate School of Business, “Emotional advertising content often outperforms rational content because it fosters a stronger connection to the brand.”

- *Emotion and Memory:* Emotional engagement, driven by color, enhances recall. Brands that maintain consistent color schemes across campaigns achieve higher brand recognition and consumer loyalty.
- *Interactive Elements:* Modern creatives often incorporate interactive elements, such as augmented reality (AR) ads, where colors dynamically change based on user interaction. These innovations amplify engagement by merging visual and experiential marketing strategies.

4.1 YouTube and Snapchat in Modern Advertising

YouTube and Snapchat have transformed digital advertising by catering to distinct audience behaviors and visual trends.

- *YouTube:* As the world’s second-largest search engine, YouTube prioritizes high-quality visuals and colors that align with content genres. According to Statista (2023), over 70% of YouTube’s traffic comes from mobile users, necessitating vibrant, clear visuals. Bold colors such as reds, oranges, and yellows often dominate thumbnails to encourage clicks. Dr. Ian Brooks suggests, “YouTube thumbnails act as modern billboards; the right use of color can make or break an ad’s performance.”
- *Snapchat:* Snapchat’s ephemeral content format thrives on creativity and playfulness. Neon colors and pastel gradients dominate its ads, appealing to its core demographic of 13-24-year-olds. Interactive ad formats such as “Snap Ads” and “AR Lenses” encourage participation. A case study by AdAge (2022) revealed that a beauty brand’s campaign using a color-customizable AR filter on Snapchat achieved a 60% engagement rate.

4.2 Advertising to Color-Blind Audiences

An estimated 300 million people worldwide experience some form of color blindness (Color Blind Awareness, 2022). Traditional advertising strategies relying solely on color can inadvertently exclude this audience.

- *Challenges:* Red-green color blindness, the most common type, makes it difficult to distinguish these hues. Advertisements heavy in these colors may lose their intended impact.
- *Solutions*
 1. *Contrast and Patterns:* Use high-contrast designs with clear patterns to differentiate elements
 2. *Descriptive Copy:* Supplement visuals with text descriptions, ensuring clarity for all viewers.
 3. *Alternative Palettes:* Test color palettes using tools like Coblis (Color Blind Simulator) to ensure visibility.
- *Research and Strategies:* Research from *Boston University's Inclusive Marketing Report* (2022) emphasizes the importance of accessibility in creating loyal customer bases. By integrating alternative communication modes such as audio cues and tactile elements, brands can expand their reach while ensuring inclusivity.

4.3 TikTok's Influence on Modern Advertising

TikTok has revolutionized advertising through its unique demographic appeal and fast-paced content format. With a primary user base of 16 to 34-year-olds, the platform's visual-centric approach thrives on bold, eye-catching colors and short-form video storytelling. According to a report by Hootsuite (2023), TikTok boasts an engagement rate that surpasses Instagram and Facebook, making it a prime platform for brands targeting younger audiences.

- *Color Trends on TikTok:* The platform heavily favors bright and vibrant color palettes, such as neon greens, electric blues, and bold pinks, which align with its youthful, energetic audience. As Dr. Gillian Rose notes, "The digital generation is drawn to colors that reflect energy, creativity, and individualism." These colors are often paired with fast transitions and upbeat soundtracks to maintain engagement.
- *Case Study:* A skincare brand targeting Gen Z leveraged TikTok's format by designing ads with pastel tones—a trending aesthetic on the platform—and incorporating a diverse range of influencers. The campaign saw a 45% increase in sales within three months, demonstrating how aligning with platform-specific color trends can drive tangible results.

4.4 Real-Life Advertising Challenges

In a recent Facebook ad campaign, a single-image creative featuring a person holding a power tool against a vibrant yellow background was launched. Despite its eye-catching design, the ad performed below average, resulting in campaign fatigue and elevated costs. The issue lay in the assumption that personal preference equates to audience appeal. To rectify this, the campaign was revamped with multiple carousel creatives featuring natural backgrounds, sky imagery, and diverse visual elements. This allowed users to choose visuals that resonated with them.

5. Application in DOOH Advertising

DOOH (Digital Out-of-Home) advertising presents unique challenges, such as environmental distractions and fleeting viewer interactions. Strategic color use, combined with dynamic visuals and motion graphics, helps overcome these challenges by creating high-impact, memorable ads.

6. Case Studies

- *Coca-Cola:* Known for its vibrant red branding, Coca-Cola uses color to evoke feelings of energy and excitement, reinforcing its identity as a joyful, refreshing beverage. According to Dr. Jill Morton, a color expert, "Coca-Cola's use of red consistently triggers feelings of happiness and energy, making it one of the most recognizable brands globally."
- *Apple:* With its minimalist design and subtle color accents, Apple's advertising reflects innovation and sophistication, aligning with its brand ethos. "Apple's restrained use of color focuses the consumer's attention on the product's features and quality," observes Dr. Paul Martin, an expert in design psychology.
- *Nike:* Employing bold contrasts and energetic tones, Nike's ads inspire action, epitomizing the brand's "Just Do It" philosophy. As noted by branding strategist Marty Neumeier, "Nike's color choices are about motivating their audience to push boundaries."
- *Snapchat Campaigns:* A beverage company targeting Gen Z launched a campaign using neon gradients and rapid transitions to mimic the platform's aesthetic. The campaign achieved a 70% engagement rate, showcasing the impact of aligning ad design with platform culture.

7. Practical Recommendations

1. *Conduct Color Testing:* Use A/B testing to identify the most effective color schemes for target audiences.
2. *Cultural Sensitivity:* Adapt color usage to align with the cultural contexts of diverse markets.
3. *Dynamic Motion:* Leverage motion graphics in DOOH ads to enhance engagement through changing color schemes.
4. *Consistency in Branding:* Maintain uniformity in color application across all platforms to strengthen brand identity.
5. *Accessibility for All:* Design ads that accommodate color-blind audiences by using contrast, descriptive text, and alternative formats.
6. *Platform-Specific Design:* Customize color and design strategies to align with platform trends, such as TikTok's preference for vibrant, youthful aesthetics.
7. *Interactive and Multisensory Ads:* Use interactive AR or VR elements to enrich the sensory experience of ads, enhancing user engagement.

8. Conclusion

The psychology of color is a powerful element in digital platform advertising and DOOH campaigns. By understanding how colors influence human emotions and behavior, advertisers can craft compelling creatives that captivate and engage audiences. Modern platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat highlight the evolving role of color in engaging diverse demographics. Furthermore, inclusive strategies ensure campaigns reach audiences with visual impairments, such as color blindness. Expert insights, real-life examples, and data-driven strategies demonstrate that the strategic use of color is essential for driving consumer action. As the

advertising landscape continues to evolve, embracing the nuances of color psychology will enable brands to connect more effectively with their audiences.

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