

by Marina Pino-Unland

Color Psychology

Feeling Blue? Seeing Red? Wonder Why?

If you've ever worked on branding your company or spent time picking out paints for your house or office, you know that color plays an important role in setting a mood and tone.

We employ color choices in everything from landscaping and interior design to clothing and cars. Color helps us to blend in or stand out, look youthful or dignified, and even to allude to an income level or social status. In our personal lives, we choose colors we like, that also reflect how we want to be perceived by others. Likewise, in business we choose colors that reflect the company image we want to project in addition to what our customers will relate and respond to.

So how does color work exactly? Colors are wavelengths. The human eye can perceive the light of wavelengths between 400 and 700 millimicrons, and the frequencies of these wavelengths have different effects on our psyche. Red has the highest wavelength at 800-650 millimicrons, making it the warmest, most vibrant color in the spectrum. In fact, the wavelength of red light is very close to that of infrared radiation. Viewing the color red actually accelerates our body's metabolism and can make us feel excited. So it's no coincidence that people feel red is a "power" color. Other warm colors that operate at high wavelengths include orange and yellow. Pink, brown, and burgundy are also considered warm colors.

On the "opposite end of the spectrum" are cool colors ranging from green and blue to violet and gray. These colors are calming and viewing them slows down the body's metabolism. This is why high stress work environments and centers caring for excitable patients should employ cool colors. However, it's important to remember the old adage of "too much of a good thing." When used in excess with no relief, cool colors can calm to the point of being oppressive and gloomy.

Within the large divide of warm and cool colors are light, dark, vivid, and dull colors. Light vs. dark can be an important choice for a consumer product. Think baby blanket vs. power tool. Light colors are airy – pastel and soft. They do not pop or demand attention, but rather are quiet and subtle. On the other

hand, dark colors feel weighty like a cast iron stove or heavy piece of furniture and emit a feeling of strength. So while light colors are a safe favorite for interior design, dark or rich hues are a more popular choice for graphic design. A company's product or logo will "jump off" a shelf or sign and appear more professional when displayed in saturated colors.

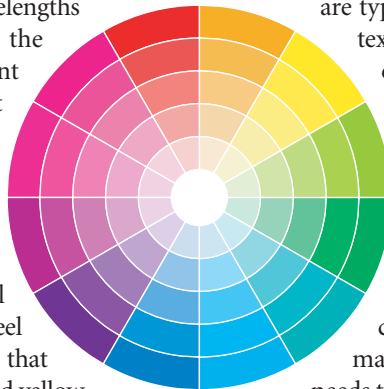
The power and strength of dark colors also make them a good choice for many companies' images and messages, depending upon clientele and industry sector. Dark colors

are typically used to highlight a company's name in text since they help to elevate readability, but it's often best to combine dark and light colors to offer relief and balance in other aspects of design, particularly in a company's logo.

Vivid colors are fun, bright, and loud. Primary colors are in this category, and are a great choice when you want to say "youth," "energy," or "wow!" Think of the bright reds, blues, and yellows used in children's toys. However, vivid colors tend to make items look less expensive so consideration needs to be taken when using them. In addition, since our eyes tire of vivid colors quickly, experts recommend using them sparingly or marrying them with less aggressive colors or shades.

Color is one of many factors that determine whether people feel comfortable with, gravitate toward, or reject products and advertisements. So whether you're choosing the colors in your office or the look of your company's logo, marketing pieces or stationery, think carefully about what you want to say because the colors you choose will make waves.

To learn more about color, visit sjmagazine.net and click on the color quiz icon.



Marina Pino-Unland is president and creative director of Chameleon Advertising & Marketing in Moorestown. Email: marina@chameleonadvertising.com.