The Effect of Emotion on Color Preferences

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Consumers find color everywhere in the marketplace – in products, packages, advertising, and brand logos. However, little is known about which colors consumers prefer, and why. Given the strong associations between colors and feelings, we investigate how the emotional state of an individual affects his/her color preferences. We examine three potential mechanisms of emotional influence on color preferences: (1) emotion-as-information, (2) emotion congruence, and (3) emotion regulation. Our study results show that happy (as opposed to sad or emotionally neutral) people prefer happy colors more.

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Can mood change our color preferences? Would people be attracted to different colors depending on their mood? Even though emotional influence on judgment and decision making has been well established (Schwarz and Clore 1983), little is known how a perceiver’s emotion affects his or her aesthetic judgments including color preferences. On the other hand, it is well established that people feel various emotions from colors (Crozier 1996; Guilford and Smith 1959; Ou et al. 2004; Valdez and Mehrabian 1994). For example, people feel calmness or low arousal from short-wavelength colors, such as blue and green. People feel excitement, happiness, or high arousal from long-wavelength colors, such as red and yellow. People feel relaxation and softness from light or pastel tone colors, while tension and hardness from dark colors. Given the strong associations of colors and emotions, we examine if an individual’s color preferences are contingent on his emotion.

Specifically, we contrast three potential hypotheses from emotion literature: affective evaluation (Andrade 2005; Schwarz and Clore 1983; Isen et al. 1978), affect regulation (Andrade 2005; Gross 1998), and affective fit. These three hypotheses predict a perceiver’s emotional influence on color preference differently.

We used within-subject design to measure color preferences, since individual differences in color preference are rather significant (Schloss and Palmer 2007). Thus, the changes between two color preferences were used as the main dependent variables of the study. We used emotionally laden movies to induce happiness, sadness, and neutral emotion. The movies were edited into black and white films to eliminate color exposure confounding during video watching. We asked participants to evaluate the colors before and after watching emotionally laden movies. As a cover story, participants were told to take part in two unrelated studies, color preference study and video evaluation study. They heard that to avoid their eyes from being tired from evaluating subtly different colors, color preference study would be split into part I and part II and videos study would take tart in between the two parts.

Colors were chosen based on Hue-Saturation-Light (HSL) color scheme, which is widely accepted by color theorists as describing three independent properties of colors (Valdez and Mehrabian 1994). To identify which aspect of colors is influenced by emotions, hue (red, blue, yellow, and green), saturation (saturated vs., muted), and lightness (light, middle, dark) dimensions of colors were fully
factorized. Therefore, we used a mixed ANOVA design: 3 emotion (happy, sad, and neutral: between-subjects) x 4 hue x 2 saturation x 3 lightness ANOVA.

One hundred fifty nine undergraduate students from a large western university participated in a study. Emotions were induced successfully as intended. The three hypotheses predicted emotional effect on color preferences in different direction. To test these hypotheses, we conducted a mixed ANOVA examining the effects of a perceiver’s emotion (happy, sad, and neutral: between-subjects) on preferences for colors’ dimensions (hue x saturation x light). A full factorial ANOVA did not reveal significant effects. However, after grouping hues by wavelength we found a significant interaction among wavelength, lightness, and emotion. In the light and middle lightness levels, the happy group’s preferences for long wavelength colors significantly increased. However, the happy group’s preferences for dark colors were not different from other groups.

In summary, a perceiver’s emotion affects his color preferences. More specifically, when people are happy (vs. neutral), happiness associated colors, that is, highly arousing colors such as light red and yellow, are more preferred.

References

**Social Attributions of Obesity and Attitudes toward Food Marketing: Implications on Framing Strategy**

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Using attribution theory, the study investigates the relationships between social attributions of obesity and consumers’ attitudes toward food-marketing policy. Findings from a survey of 316 college students indicate that differences in social attributions, causes of and responsibilities to obesity, are significantly related to consumers’ attitudes toward food-marketing policy. Attitudes toward food advertising and beliefs on the importance of obesity are also important in predicting consumers’ attitudes toward food-marketing policies, both directly and indirectly through social attributions about obesity. A synergistic framing, instead of a competitive framing, between personal and social attributions is recommended as a message framing strategy to build consumers’ support for policies on food marketing.

**Antecedents of Attitudes towards Counterfeits of Luxury Brands: A Consumer Misbehavior Model Perspective**

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*Conceptualization:* Counterfeiting is a global phenomenon with a growth rate of 1700% over the past decade (U.S. Department of State, 2006). Estimates of global sales for counterfeit products are about $600 billion per year, accounting for 9% of world trade (Cordeiro 2007). Much research can be found in the literature that deals with anti-counterfeit strategies from the supply side to protect counterfeiting (e.g., Chaudhry et al 2005; Shultz and Nill 2002). However, the counterfeiting problem is not related only to the manufacturers of counterfeit products, but also the demand for these counterfeit products. For better understanding consumer behavior about counterfeit products, the consumer misbehavior model was used for this study. Consumer misbehavior is defined as ‘behavioral acts by consumers which violate the generally accepted norms of conduct in consumption situations’ (Fullerton & Punj 1997, p.336). This consumer misbehavior has been accepted as a component of consumer experience. More than thirty-five types of consumer misbehavior such as shoplifting, financial fraud, and purchase of counterfeit products have been explained. Based on the literature review, this research involves three elements: 1) product variables such as price and quality, 2) individual variables such as materialism and consumer ethics, and 3) social variables such as subjective norms.

*Purpose of this study:* Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the determinants that influence consumers to purchase counterfeit products, and to propose and test a model that deals with the main antecedents of consumer attitudes toward counterfeits of luxury brands. Six hypotheses were developed. H1: The perceived price-advantage of counterfeits has a positive effect on the attitude toward counterfeit products. H2: The perceived quality of counterfeits has a positive effect on the attitude toward counterfeit products. H3: Materialism has a positive effect on the attitude toward counterfeit products. H4: Consumer ethics has a negative effect on the attitude