

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF COLOURS ON HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Colours are not just visual stimuli; they are psychological triggers that influence human emotions, perceptions, and behaviours. This paper explores the psychological effects of colours, drawing upon various studies from fields such as psychology, marketing, art, and design. It aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how different colours affect mood, cognition, and behaviour and examines the implications of colour psychology in real-world applications, including marketing, interior design, and personal well-being.

For instance, while the colour red is associated with urgency and energy, blue colour promotes trust and calm and green fosters focus and relaxation. Moreover, the paper addresses the role of cultural differences and individual differences in colour perception, suggesting that the effects of colour are not universal but are influenced by factors such as gender, age and cultural background. Ultimately, this paper argues that understanding the psychological impacts of colour can help optimise environments for specific goals—whether improving productivity, enhancing creativity, reducing stress or facilitating healing. The findings have broad implications for design practices in both commercial and therapeutic settings, offering valuable insights into how colour can be used as a tool for enhancing human well-being and influencing behaviour.

KEYWORDS: Psychology, colour, mind, behaviour, warm and cool colours, Impact, effect.

INTRODUCTION

Colours play a vital role in human life. They are a constant part of our environment, from nature to unnatural settings. Colours can evoke specific emotional responses, influence cognitive processes and shape behaviour in subtle yet powerful ways. The study of how colours affect human psychology is often referred to as "colour psychology." Understanding these effects can aid in optimising environments for emotional well-being, enhancing productivity and influencing consumer choices.

Colour psychology is rooted in both physiological and emotional responses. Physiologically, colours can affect heart rate, blood pressure, and arousal levels. Emotionally, colours can evoke feelings such as warmth, calmness, energy or stress, which affect behaviour. Over the years, various studies have linked particular colours with specific psychological effects, although these associations can vary depending on personal experiences, cultural contexts and individual differences.

1 The Character of Colours in Human Psychology

1. Red: Aggression, Power and Passion

Red is one of the most emotionally intense colours. It is often related to strong emotions like passion, love, and anger. In psychological terms, red tends to increase arousal, heart rate and pressure of blood.

It is a colour that demands attention and stimulates the brain, which is why it is often used in warning signs, advertisements and sports. However, prolonged exposure to red can also evoke feelings of aggression and frustration.

- **Marketing and Consumer Behaviour:** Brands like Coca-Cola and McDonald's use red to evoke excitement, hunger and action. Studies have shown that consumers are more likely to make impulsive purchasing decisions in red environments.

- **Cultural Context:** In some cultures, red symbolises luck and prosperity, while in other cultures or countries, it may be linked to anger or danger.

2. Blue: Productivity, Trust and Calm

Blue is known for its calming and tranquil effects. It is frequently related to the sky and the ocean, evoking feelings of peace, stability, and reliability. Blue is often used in environments where focus and relaxation are needed, such as offices, hospitals, and bedrooms.

- **Psychological Effects:** Studies show that blue can reduce nervousness and lower blood pressure, making it an ideal colour for reducing stress.

- **Marketing and Branding:** Many financial institutions, such as banks, use blue in their logos to communicate trustworthiness and dependability. It is also widely used in corporate settings to enhance productivity and concentration.

- **Cultural Context:** Blue is often considered a colour of trust and peace in Western cultures, whereas in some Asian cultures, it can symbolise immortality or healing.

3. Yellow: Attention, Happiness and Optimism

Yellow is the colour most often associated with happiness, energy and optimism. It is stimulating and attracts attention, which is why it is commonly used in road signs and advertisements. Yellow has been found to grow feelings of warmth and cheerfulness, though it can also cause nervousness or irritation in certain situations.

- **Psychological Effects:** Yellow stimulates the nervous system and can improve concentration, making it a favourable colour for study and creative environments.

- **Marketing and Branding:** Brands such as McDonald's and IKEA utilise yellow to capture attention and create a sense of fun and enthusiasm.

- **Cultural Context:** In some Eastern cultures, yellow is associated with royalty, whereas in Western cultures, it may represent caution or warning.

4. Green: Health, Balance and Growth

Green is often related to nature, tranquillity and balance. It is a soothing colour that evokes feelings of calmness and relaxation. Studies have shown that green can reduce stress and promote a sense of well-being. Spending time in green environments (e.g., parks, forests) has been linked to improved mental health.

- **Psychological Effects:** Green is believed to have restorative effects on the mind and body, reducing nervousness and enhancing feelings of harmony. It is a popular colour for health and wellness brands.

- **Marketing and Branding:** Companies in the health, eco-friendly and organic sectors often use green to represent sustainability, growth and environmental consciousness.

- **Cultural Context:** In many cultures, green symbolises growth, fertility and renewal. However, in some societies, green may have negative connotations such as jealousy or envy.

5. Purple: Mystery, Luxury and Creativity

Purple is often associated with royalty, luxury and spirituality. It blends the calm stability of blue with the fiery intensity of red, making it a colour that stimulates creativity and imagination. Purple can evoke a sense of mystery and elegance, making it a popular choice in artistic and high-end product designs.

- **Psychological Effects:** Purple is thought to encourage creativity and problem-solving. It can also foster feelings of relaxation and meditation.

- **Marketing and Branding:** High-end brands like Cadillac and Hallmark often use purple to convey exclusivity and luxury. It is also popular in products related to personal care and beauty.

- **Cultural Context:** Purple is a colour of spirituality and introspection in many cultures, but it is also historically linked to wealth and aristocracy.

6. Black: Mourning, Power and Sophistication

Black is a powerful and versatile colour, symbolising sophistication, power and mystery. It is often used to create a sleek and elegant aesthetic, which is why it is common in luxury goods, formal wear and modern design. However, black can also evoke feelings of sadness, mourning or negativity, depending on the context.

- **Psychological Effects:** While black can signify power and sophistication, it can also create a sense of isolation or bleakness if used excessively in certain settings.

- **Marketing and Branding:** High-end fashion brands like Chanel and Gucci frequently use black to convey luxury and exclusivity.

- **Cultural Context:** In Western cultures, black is often associated with mourning and death, while in other cultures, it can symbolise strength or authority.

7. White: Cleanliness, Purity and Simplicity

White is often linked to purity, cleanliness and simplicity. It represents a blank slate or new beginnings. White is a calming colour that can evoke feelings of clarity and peace. However, excessive use of white can lead to feelings of emptiness or sterility.

- **Psychological Effects:** White has been shown to enhance concentration and create a sense of space. It is often used in medical and sanitary environments for its clean and neutral qualities.

- **Marketing and Branding:** Brands like Apple and Tesla use white to project a sense of innovation, simplicity and cutting-edge technology.

- **Cultural Context:** White symbolises purity in many Western cultures, but in some Eastern cultures, it is associated with mourning and death.

2 The Effect of Colour in Specific Environments

1. Productivity and Workplace

Colours in the workplace can significantly affect employee mood and productivity. Blue, green and yellow are commonly used in office settings to foster calmness, creativity and focus. Research suggests that environments with a good balance of colours can lead to increased productivity and well-being. Conversely, harsh or clashing colours can create stress and distractions.

2. Advertising and Marketing

The use of colour in marketing and advertising is crucial for influencing consumer behaviour. Colours can affect purchasing decisions, evoke emotional responses and even increase brand recognition. For example, warm colours like red and yellow tend to attract attention and stimulate action, whereas cool colours like blue and green evoke trust and relaxation.

3. Healing and Therapy

In colour therapy, known as chromo therapy, certain colours are believed to have healing properties. For instance, blue is used to soothe and calm, while yellow can energise and uplift the spirit. Hospitals and therapy rooms often incorporate specific colours to improve patients' psychological and physical well-being.

3 Applications of Colour Psychology

2. Colour in Interior Design

The psychological effects of colour can significantly influence how individuals feel in a given space, affecting their mood, productivity and even sleep quality. Designers use colour theory to craft environments that evoke specific emotions or reactions.

- **Living Spaces:** Warm colours such as red, orange and yellow can create a cosy and inviting atmosphere, ideal for living rooms or kitchens. However, they can also cause overstimulation if used in excess, making it important to balance them with neutral tones.

- **Bedroom Design:** Soft blues, greens and pastels are often used in bedroom design because they promote relaxation and restful sleep. Blue, specifically, is known for its calming properties, helping to lower heart rates and reduce stress, making it ideal for sleep environments.

- **Office and Work Environments:** Productivity-enhancing colours like blue, green and yellow are commonly incorporated in office design. Yellow and green are thought to boost creativity and focus, while blue supports concentration. In contrast, intense colours like red might be better suited for areas requiring quick action or short bursts of high energy (e.g., a brainstorming session room).

- **Healthcare Environments:** The healing environment in hospitals can benefit from calming and restorative colours. Soft blues and greens promote relaxation and calm, helping to reduce nervousness for patients. Colours like white and light pastel tones are often used for their clean, hygienic and neutral qualities.

4. Colour in Creative Expression and Art

Artists and designers have long understood the psychological power of colour in influencing viewer emotions and conveying messages. Colours are not only tools for aesthetic appeal but also serve to express deeper psychological and symbolic meanings.

- **Expressionism:** In the Expressionist art movement, artists used bold and non-naturalistic colours to express emotional experiences rather than depict the world realistically. Artists like Edvard Munch and Wassily Kandinsky used colour to convey intense emotions, exploring themes such as nervousness, despair and ecstasy.

- **Impressionism:** Artists like Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir utilised light and colour to evoke moods and the ephemeral qualities of nature. In this style, colour was less about form and more about perception, capturing fleeting moments.

- **Psychological Effect of Colour in Art:** The psychological effect of colour on art viewers is significant. For instance, red in an artwork can evoke feelings of passion or aggression, while blue might evoke tranquillity or melancholy. Artists use this understanding to guide the emotional tone of their work.

5. Colour in Fashion

Colour has a profound effect on how individuals are perceived in terms of personality and status. Fashion designers carefully select colours for each season to evoke specific trends and psychological responses in their customers.

- **Black:** Known for its slimming and timeless appeal, black is often used in formal or professional settings to convey authority, elegance and sophistication. The "little black dress" remains a symbol of class and versatility.

• **Bright Colours:** Vibrant colours like pink, red and yellow in fashion can communicate energy, optimism and youthfulness. These colours are often used in spring and summer collections to evoke a sense of freshness and joy.

• **Neutral Colours:** Neutral tones like beige, white, and grey are often used to project a calm, understated look, emphasising simplicity and elegance. These colours are frequently used in minimalist fashion trends where less is more.

The Researcher personally believes that the above-mentioned text is partially correct as it is based on certain conditions. For this research, The Researcher has done many tasks, as he met a lot of people and went to school with youngsters. The Researcher asked them a lot of questions about what they felt for different colours and got amazing results, which were far from the above-mentioned reality.

The Researcher used a lot of websites and books about colour psychology and their effect on humans. The Researcher find different meanings and emotions of a single particular colour in Western and Asian countries. Many youngsters, Teachers and professional artists use different colours to show different emotions in their paintings. But personally, researchers find it unjustifiable as colours evoke different emotions, which is according to colour psychology, but in reality, there is no colour which can evoke emotions in the minds of people.

According to psychology, the colour red is related to a range of emotions, including passion, anger, danger, power, confidence, motivation, etc. In a research experiment, The Researcher showed some of his paintings, which include early sunrise landscapes, creative paintings based on Love painted in red colour to youngsters, School Teachers and Professional artists. Ninety-five cent of the Individuals replied that they felt zero emotions after watching those paintings. Not only paintings painted in red colour, but also other paintings painted in different colours had the same response. It is believed that cool colours (that is, blue and green) which is known for their calming, balancing and tranquil effects. But in reality, to find calmness and relax, people love to visit Natural places like Hill stations, beaches, etc. Beauty and colours of nature give us utmost satisfaction of relaxation, and calmness, which a painting cannot give. It is not compulsory that cool colours (that is, blue and green) can only give us a sense of relaxation/calmness; other colours can also give the same feeling that blue and green colours can provide. Theme plays a more important role than colours in painting. A person gets emotional depending on the theme of a painting rather than the colours painted on a canvas.

Black is a powerful and versatile colour, symbolising sophistication, power and mystery. However, black can also evoke feelings of sadness, mourning or negativity, depending on the context. Most people avoid this colour in their daily life just because it is said as a negative colour, but even though they find relaxation a night.

Lastly, The Researcher want to state that seeing a painting makes a person feel good, but cannot provide relaxation/calmness and evoke emotions through colours. People getting emotional after seeing a painting depends on the theme of the painting than colours. From my viewpoint, it is Irrefutable to say that colours can create emotions in humans.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Researcher has written this paper by collecting the information from the secondary sources that include YouTube, Web Articles, Websites, etc.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this research paper is to know in detail about the Truth of psychological effects of colours on the human mind in their daily life.

CONCLUSION

The study of colour psychology offers a diverse and rich understanding of how colours influence human mood, behaviour and cognition. As we've explored, the psychological effect of colours is profound and spans a wide array of applications, from marketing to interior design to therapy. Colour choices in environments can affect productivity, well-being and emotional responses, making it a powerful tool in various fields, including healthcare, business, education and personal development. In the future, ongoing research into colour psychology will likely deepen our understanding of how hues and specific shades affect human behaviour across different demographics, cultures and contexts. By studying the neural and psychological mechanisms behind colour perception, we can refine how colours are used to optimise environments, enhance emotional well-being and improve human interaction in a wide range of domains.

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