A CRASH COURSE IN COLOR THEORY PART THREE
The Psychology of Color

**Orange**
Creates excitement, enthusiasm and draws attention. Orange evokes warmth as well as caution.

**Green**
Encourages creativity in a working environment, evokes health and nature, and symbolizes money. To give a sense of stability and wealth, many financial institutions use green in their branding.

**Purple**
Symbolizes royalty and wealth. Purple also evokes a sense of success and wisdom.

**Gray**
Gray is the perfect neutral to work with in a graphics environment and has less reflection than white. Evokes a sense of professionalism and calm. Seen as sleek and high-end and gives one a sense of stability. Too much evokes a feeling of aging, depression and loss.

**Pink**
A calming and warm color that evokes love and romance. Pink is a clean and feminine color. Recently however, there has been a backlash against its overuse in product packaging, giving rise to the term “pink-washed.”

**Red**
Evolves strong emotions like passion or intensity, encourages appetite, symbolizes love and danger. Eyes look to red first, it draws attention, creates movement and excitement. Too much red however, feels hostile.

**Yellow**
Cheerful, warm and symbolizes energy and increases metabolism. Yellow also causes the brain to release serotonin, giving one a feeling of optimism. That is all well and good but if used wrongly on a brand’s graphics and especially on a website, yellow evokes a hostile feeling and can strain eyes and cause eye fatigue.

**Black**
Enhances the feeling of sophistication and luxury, and is slimming to wear. Black also symbolizes death, mourning and evil.

**White**
Symbolizes purity and innocence. Evokes a sense of spaciousness and clarity. Do not underestimate the organized feeling of white and do fight the urge to fill every empty space with a sales pitch.

**Blue**
Calming, tranquil and associated with water and peace. Curbs appetite and creates a productive environment. Blue causes the brain to release chemicals that calm, but use too much blue and that sends a cold and uncaring message.

**CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS**

While colors are gender-neutral, our society is not. Blue was widely considered “feminine” while pink was “masculine.” In fact, it was only an advertising campaign in the early 20th century that reversed that trend after a nation-wide competition.

Purple was, for centuries, a color that only royalty could afford and became associated with the imperial classes of Rome, Egypt, and Persia. More than 9,000 mollusks from Tyre were needed to create just one gram of Tyrian purple dye. During the Elizabethan era in England, laws forbade anyone but close relatives of royalty to wear purple. It wasn’t until 1856 when a synthetic was created.

Red means different things in different cultures. To Westerners, red is energetic, action, love, anger, and warning. In China, red is good luck, happiness and vitality, and is used in many ceremonies, including weddings. In India, red is used in wedding ceremonies as well, and symbolizes wealth, opulence, purity, fertility, love, and beauty. To wear white to a wedding in China is bad luck, and in India, white is the traditional mourning wear of widows.

Sources:
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