

What is communication without colour?



Through the lens of gender disparity, to what extent do the colour choices seen in popular media shape the way we interpret and react to communication.

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## Introduction

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For my personal interest project I have chosen to explore, “through the lens of gender disparity, to what extent do the colour choices seen in popular media shape the way we interpret and react to communication”. Growing up, I loved colour, it helped me study effectively, see the beauty in my surroundings and even gain control of my emotions. As I got older and technology advanced, I began to see more clearly the ways in which I interpreted colour in the media and the ways this had impacted my reaction and interpretation of the world around me. Colour psychology is a concept that is crucial in shaping how individuals see their surroundings. This notion is often overlooked, yet the importance is understated. In our modern-day society, the increasing use of media across a proliferation of platforms leads to the higher consumption of colour, which is strategically and subliminally being used to create messages for the audience.

Social media is the primary platform that will be referenced and integrated throughout this PIP. A close examination of colour psychology can create an in-depth understanding of where it is used and how it influences consumers’ interpretation of communication, thus broadening awareness of social constructs and encouraging critical thinking.

Narrowing my focus to gender as a deeply embedded social and cultural construct, the PIP explores how colour exploits reactions and interpretations across diverse contexts. My fascination with the effects of colour prompted me to delve deeper into its impacts on emotional and psychological effects, in the contexts of branding, marketing, and digital environments. My research findings led me to explore the power of the media in enabling companies and platforms to strategically capitalise on colour, which can stimulate consumerism and overconsumption of goods. Shifts in culture can arise through the influence of the media creating implications for cultural diversity, and the potential for homogenisation of colour meanings.

There are many concepts that are linked to this PIP. Commercialisation and commodification is seen through the branding and advertising and how those processes have influenced the consumption of colour. Continuity and change is

evident through the changing interpretations of colour for males and females across time and seeing how popular media has had a significant influence on those changes. The social theory of change indicates how colour has been socially constructed by social media.

Exploring my hypothesis, I utilized both primary and secondary research methodologies including a questionnaire, expert interview, focus group and content analysis. My interview was with a Community associate and a Visual Communication Designer. With professional and prior knowledge the interviewees talked about colour used within culture and branding, successfully identifying examples of brands and cultures that create meaning off their use of colour. Incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research, enabled a comprehensive understanding of the impact of colours on the human psyche.

## Log

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Initially, I was uncertain when developing a topic for my PIP, as I struggled to come up with ideas that were both personally meaningful and aligned with syllabus concepts. I was scrolling through Tik Tok when I came across a neuroscientist discussing colour psychology and how our brain and eyes process different light. This led me to consider the way that humans perceive colour and how that influences our reactions. I still remember when I was in biology and a quarter of the boys in the class had colour blindness and the teacher couldn't use certain whiteboard colours. I always thought that it would be interesting to see how everyone else saw so I started researching the differences between how males and females view colour.

My idea eventually evolved into looking at colour through communication and how through colour people are able to interpret and react to it differently across genders. Originally I was just looking to see how one's identity was influenced by colour through emotional and psychological reactions but that only made up one chapter and I found it hard to move the content away from Science to consider the greater societal impacts. I broadened my research to include greater links to course theory including commodification and corporate branding.

By watching You Tube videos, TED Edtalks and documentaries on colour it helped inspire me to explore ideas for what my chapters could be on. I also found inspiration through social media sources on the topic of colour psychology. I further read Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's book on "Theory of colours" which speaks through his own scientific conclusions connecting color and philosophical ideas. Online journal articles further provided me with professional reflections of colour within society. I also found that going to Jstor and searching up colour gave me ideas on different topics I could explore through colour, specifically the article, "The Two-Dimensional Impact of Color on Shopping" influenced me to look more into branding,

Throughout my PIP process I looked to many secondary and primary research methods which helped with providing me with qualitative and quantitative data. The primary research methods I conducted include, an interview, focus group, questionnaire and personal reflection. These research methods have helped provide me with meaningful insights and diverse responses to how individuals and collective groups have been influenced and respond to colour. I have also conducted in depth secondary research that has helped support my investigation by providing me with foundational knowledge, professional perspectives and contextual depth to support my analysis and synthesis.

I have always loved design and media communication and my topic on colour as a form of communication is heavily linked to this. This PIP has provided me with knowledge on how we interpret and react to colour within our everyday lives linking to its consumption. Hence, this PIP process and experience has given me fundamental skills and knowledge that will be beneficial to acknowledging colour as a powerful tool in communication.

## Chapter 1

### *The influence of the media's use of colour on our emotional and psychological reaction*

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With the growing use of technological devices in our everyday life, more people are being impacted by the strategic use of colour in the media. This exposure to colour provokes various emotional and psychological reactions which differ between men and women. This is largely due to the impact of technology and its commodification and capitalism, leading to the debate around the misuse of power by the media and corporations.

The exposure to colour and light provokes various emotional and psychological reactions which differ between men and women. It is well-established that colours are capable of eliciting strong emotional reactions, and individuals are able to create associations between specific colours and feelings, further shaping their identity.<sup>1</sup> Colour is thus used as a commercial tool in order to guide emotional and psychological reactions to advertisements and products. The emotional responses elicited by colour has a direct impact on consumption behaviour. For example, the colour “yellow” has connotations of happiness, warmth and energy. This positive emotional association has a direct effect in increasing consumption behaviour.<sup>2</sup> This was supported by the questionnaire when respondents were asked how the colour yellow made them feel. Only 39.13% of males said it makes them feel happy whereas 72.14% of females said it made them feel happy. This suggests that women may be more emotionally aware of colour and its integration through the media.<sup>3</sup> Through media platforms like Tik Tok and Instagram, content creators will often use certain colours to grab the audience's attention. The question then arises whether our perceptions of colours stem from a culturally ingrained narrative or a psychological phenomenon. It seems to be both culturally ingrained and psychologically ingrained. From a physiological perspective, our three cone

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<sup>1</sup>J. Yang and S. Jicheng, '[Retracted] the Application of Color Psychology in Community Health Environment Design' (2022) 2022 Journal of Environmental and Public Health, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9436572/>, accessed 22 July 2025.

<sup>2</sup>DigitalSynopsis.com, 'What Different Colors Mean and How to Use Them' (Digital Synopsis 5 April 2016), <https://digitalsynopsis.com/design/color-psychology-meanings-usage/>, accessed 20 July 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Primary research- Questionnaire

cells and processing of different wavelengths of light allow us to perceive “a wide spectrum of colours”.<sup>4</sup> After this detection of colour, it can be processed through the visual cortex. There are also many biological factors that affect the way in which we interpret colours, one being gender.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the way we perceive colour is culturally ingrained through the media and societal gender stereotypes. These culturally ingrained perspectives are impacted by upbringing and learnt psychological responses from stereotypes, influencing how we respond to colour.

Colour associations like blue for boys and pink for girls create a gendered narrative and social construct where consumers are subliminally drawn to associate genders to colours and divide between feminine and masculine products. The colour pink has created a divide and commodified femininity.<sup>6</sup> Questionnaire results indicated that the colour palette females found most favourable were the blue shaded one and the pink pastel one. In contrast, the male respondents chose the blue palette and none of them chose pink.<sup>7</sup> These results illustrate the gendered associations to colour and the way that society's expectations and traditions have influenced our colour preferences. These associations have the ability to control the consumption behaviour of men and women. It shapes consumer identity and reinforces gender roles by internalising gender expectations in consumers. These gender associations also have the effect on boys who face constant adversity for liking stereotypical girl colours like pink. These challenges can be stimulated through the media and can be seen through the choice of colour in clothes, especially since clothes and fashion are an expression of identity. The key question is how we separate the cultural narrative from colour? Fashion serves as a powerful vehicle for trend setting and giving colour meaning, where the popularity of certain colours can rise and fall rapidly as styles shift. In the focus group, participants were initially shown the ‘brat’ green colour and asked how they feel when they see the colour green. The majority of the respondents stated that it is an “ugly” colour, however, when participants were introduced to

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<sup>4</sup>N. Pasmanter and S. Munakomi, ‘Physiology, Color Perception’ (Nih.gov 12 September 2022), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK544355/>, accessed 20 July 2025.

<sup>5</sup>N. Jones, ‘Color Is in the Eye, and Brain, of the Beholder’ [2022] Knowable Magazine <> [https://www.realclearscience.com/2022/11/01/color\\_is\\_in\\_the\\_eye\\_and\\_brain\\_of\\_the\\_beholder\\_862302.html](https://www.realclearscience.com/2022/11/01/color_is_in_the_eye_and_brain_of_the_beholder_862302.html), accessed 27 July 2025.

<sup>6</sup>D. Noon, ‘The Pink Divide : Commodified Femininity, Gender Performativity and Identity’ (Research Online 2025), [https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses\\_hons/58/](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/58/), accessed 27 July 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Primary research- Questionnaire



'brat', the majority of the participants stated that the association with the music album had changed their perception towards the colour. These responses highlight the powerful role of associations that social constructs have created through social media to influence how we identify colour meanings. The known emotional and psychological effects of colour have been capitalised on by the media and businesses, and thus, colour has become commercialised in order to profit from. The implication is that as people consume an increasing amount of this media, they become more susceptible to falling into consumer traps, such as overconsumption. Due to the impact of technology and communication, these associations have become more prolific as more people are exposed to media platforms, particularly social media.

The way our brains perceive different colours significantly influences our emotional and psychological response. Colour profoundly impacts our cognitive ability to interpret surroundings. This is seen where, “across most of the visible spectrum males will require a longer wavelength than females in order to experience the same hue”. Longer wavelengths are often associated with warmer colours, meaning a colour like orange may seem more red for males compared to females.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, the grass is perceived as more green for women. Due to this subtle physiological difference it explains why women are often more accurate when doing tasks that require colour discrimination. This research reinforces the ideology that biological sex is the central link in sensory processing, yet it creates conflict through the generalisations of human experiences. This conflict of colour generalisation is perpetuated throughout the media. Due to the divide in colour perception, women are more adept at distinguishing different shades compared to men. These statistics foreshadow the focus group results where the participants were given 7 individual shades of red and asked how many shades there were. Among the 7 boys only 2 of them guessed correctly, whereas out of the 7 girls 5 of them were able to guess the correct amount of shades.<sup>9</sup> The focus group

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<sup>8</sup>A. Elliot, 'Color and Psychological Functioning: A Review of Theoretical and Empirical Work' (2015) 6 *Frontiers in Psychology*, <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00368/full>, accessed 12 April 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Primary research, Focus group

highlights the idea that colour is perceived differently through gender and it is important for people to notice that media uses those differences to commodify colour, and in turn, influence consumption behaviour. The biological differences in how men and women perceive colour are related to the hunter gatherer hypothesis, where our prehistoric roles have been reinforced through institutional power. Thus, gender differences in color perception are greatly impacted by history and genetic variation. Due to the evolutionary adaptation and commercialisation of colour, men and women perceive and are influenced by colour differently. In today's modern society, individuals on social media frequently use colour intentionally, reflecting both their personal interpretation and the emotional meanings colours hold.

“Being a teenage girl, growing up where social media and communication platforms were constantly evolving, I found that they had a significant impact in shaping my identity”. Reflecting on myself, I have always considered myself as someone who's observant and aware of my surroundings. As I got older I began to notice something deeper: the media wasn't just presenting information, it was subtly creating an emotion through the use of colour. As media platforms become increasingly integrated into our everyday life, the psychological power of colour extends its influential impact to a wider and larger audience. This reveals how emotional responses to colour aren't just shaped through the biological influences, but they are socially constructed meanings which are shaped by our worldviews. Our worldviews shape how we interpret colour, meaning brands will often associate colours with individuals' worldview whether this includes their belief, culture or even political view. “Furthermore, whether it was the warm tones used in an advertising to provoke comfort and trust or the soft pastel pink clothing brand targeted towards young girls, the media's use of colour had a quiet but powerful influence on how I processed information, formed opinions, and made decisions.” This growth in “awareness has allowed me to be more socially aware of media's use of colour as a powerful tool, not just for marketing but for shaping gendered experiences through the emotional and psychological influences.”<sup>10</sup>

To conclude, the media has used colour to provoke an emotional and psychological reaction from its audience, in order to push stereotypes and

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<sup>10</sup> Primary research, Personal reflection

constructs. Through understanding and exploring the science behind how brains are wired to perceive colour, it helps to create an understanding on how people are impacted by colour.

## Chapter 2

### *The influence of colour in branding*

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Colour plays a pivotal role in how brands communicate through the media to connect with their target audience. The changing nature of the media is being influenced by the increase in associations of colours, significantly influencing brands' use of colour in order to effectively communicate. Brands need to communicate visually appealing colour palettes that are emotionally driven and that aim to align their visual identity with current audience expectations and moods. Brands also need to use their visual appearance to target their specific market. As media becomes more globalised and a part of society large platforms are constantly influencing brands choices and usage of colour to create trends. Over time, commercialisation has commodified colour by further associating certain colours and shades with gender identities. Specifically this can be seen through the continual associations with blue for boys and pink for girls, further turning these normalised codes into consumer expectations. These colour-gender stereotypes are created through advertising, packaging and product design. This chapter will explore the ways in which brands effectively use colour through social exclusion between genders in order to create consumption. Understanding the psychology of colour that is used in branding is essential in creating an understanding of “how and why we interact with the brands in our lives” and “understanding how it is a powerful tool that can be used to design more meaningful and memorable brand experiences.”<sup>11</sup>

Due to commercialisation we see that brands are increasingly using colour, aesthetics and visual appearances of products in order to entice consumers. Women are generally impacted by colour to a greater extent, as they “perceive more colors and have a greater awareness of differences among colors than men do.”<sup>12</sup> This heightened awareness often leads to a greater emotional and psychological response to colour, meaning women can be more captivated by

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<sup>11</sup>B. Lischer, 'Ignyte Branding Agency' (Ignyte23 July 2024), <https://www.ignytebrands.com/>, accessed 1 June 2025.

<sup>12</sup>'Color Psychology: See the Value for Marketing | USC MAPP Online' (Usc.edu2023), <https://appliedpsychologydegree.usc.edu/blog/color-psychology-used-in-marketing-an-overview>, accessed 2 June 2025.

colour in branding. This suggests reasons for the significant influence of gender constructs on the way in which marketers can strategically leverage off colour psychology when choosing colours to use in marketing. Colour has been commodified in branding to attract customers by employing visual appearances. An example of this is Starbucks, an American brand that has commodified its colours green and white to convey eco-friendliness and freshness, thus creating “a sense of calmness and balance”, aligning with their brand values of “creating a welcoming and relaxing environment”.<sup>13</sup> When brands market themselves, “93% of buyers focus on the visual appearance”, highlighting the importance of colour choice and usage<sup>14</sup>. The DMN web page says that, “Studies show that up to 90% of our first impression comes from color.”<sup>15</sup> The commodification of colour has been capitalised in branding to be used as a strategic tool to attract and engage consumers. The strategic use of colour in branding creates a world of consumerism and materialism, where colour leads to overconsumption. Through my focus group, I tested whether people would be able to remember the appearance of the WhatsApp app. Out of the 14 people in the focus group, all of them were able to correctly identify the colour (green) of the app and even get the shade on point. However, none of them were able to draw the symbol correctly.<sup>16</sup> The fact that everyone was able to use the right colour illustrates how colour is a powerful tool when drawing on associations. Furthermore, this illustrates how, in marketing, the colour alone can be enough to trigger the brand's identity.

Brands draw on colours that promote certain feelings and can be used to sell certain products. Brands often change their usage of colour between men and women, as each gender reacts and interprets colours differently. While the name of a brand may not indicate the gender it is targeting, consumers often rely on the colour choices in branding and draw upon gender traditions and norms in order to

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<sup>13</sup>A. Whittaker, ‘Unlocking the Psychology of Colour: How Brands Use Colour to Connect with Consumers’ (Major Digital 9 August 2023), <https://majordigital.com/articles/unlocking-the-psychology-of-colour-how-brands-use-colour-to-connect-with-consumers>, accessed 10 June 2025.

<sup>14</sup>DigitalSynopsis.com, ‘The Psychology of Colors in Marketing (Infographic)’ (Digital Synopsis 6 October 2016), <https://digitalsynopsis.com/advertising/psychology-of-colors-in-marketing/>, accessed 18 June 2025.

<sup>15</sup>G. Ciotti, Help Scout, ‘Color Psychology in Marketing and Branding Is All about Context - Help Scout’ (Helpscout.com 2024), <https://www.helpscout.com/blog/psychology-of-color/>, accessed 19 June 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Primary Research, Focus Group

associate the brand with a specific gender. Hence, brands strategically use colour in order to manipulate and target their audience. This can be seen through the use of pink in the Victoria Secrets logo. A marketing and consumer analyst talks about how “its main target market is the average everyday woman who is always on a quest to look and feel her very best”. The product is marketed using pink to associate the brand with “bright, fun, flirty, and comfortable”.<sup>17</sup> This interlinks with the focus group, where the recipients were asked to respond to how they feel when they see the Victoria Secret logo. One of the boys responded by saying “the brand is targeting women specifically through the use of the colour pink.” One of the female respondents further added that it was a “gender norm and traditional colour associated with women.” This further illustrates how brands can strategically use colour through associations with traditional values.

In Louann Brizerdine’s book, she talks about how women are “more empathetic to new information” and when buying goods they draw on their feelings and are easier to evoke emotions that lead to a sale.<sup>18</sup> Brands can easily draw on this and target women into purchases through the use of colour and the way they market products. This reinforces the idea of social exclusion towards the gender stereotypes surrounding the way women are represented in the market place. At the same time, these strategies encourage consumption because brands are able to successfully connect with their consumers on an emotional level. In comparison, men are not as attentive and “pay attention to the functionality of the product”<sup>19</sup>. Brands can draw on these qualities, for example, by using colours like “blue, black and green” which can be associated with strength. Brands use these colours to associate with feelings and their target market. These colours are social constructs used by society to advertise effectively. Furthermore, through associations these brands cause people to overconsume products based on colour influences. Through the exploitation and commodification of a colour within a brand, consumers are drawn to its consumption. The manipulation of colour means that brands have the power to define social norms and stereotypes. They

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<sup>17</sup>Aithor, ‘Victoria Secret Target Market & Consumer Demographics’ (aithor.com27 March 2024), <https://aithor.com/essay-examples/victoria-secret-target-market-consumer-demographics>, accessed 7 June 2025.

<sup>18</sup> “Google Books.” 2017. Google.com.au. 2017, (The\_Female\_Brain), accessed 10 June

<sup>19</sup> ‘Google Books’ (Google.com.au2025), accessed 15 June 2025.

are able to exploit psychological shortcuts to turn gender into a tool of profit. Brands identify with the social constructs and colour meanings through social media to create excessive consumption.

Colours have a large influence on consumer purchasing decisions. They can be used strategically in branding to provoke certain emotions. “Studies have further shown that colour can increase brand recognition by up to 80%”, highlighting how important it is for brands to commercialise their brands identity.<sup>20</sup> Brands rely on the commercialisation of their product and advertising through colour to further lead into commodification. This use of colour is important in influencing consumer behaviour and maximising how a brand is remembered. Brands leverage on associations to create “a desired emotional response in their target audience.”<sup>21</sup> When a “brand selects colours that align with their brand’s core values, it fosters trust and increases engagement” with consumers. <sup>22</sup>A brand can form this trust through colours. While “black and blue will frequently be marketed for male brands, thanks to research, brands do not have to use gender stereotypical colours in order to reach their target market.”<sup>23</sup> When asked in the questionnaire what the colour combination of red and yellow reminded respondents of, 90% of them thought it represented Macdonalds. <sup>24</sup> There is customer trust in this brand as people are able to know that it is a fast food chain. Red is used by many other brands using colour psychology in order to promote their product. Through the commercialisation of Coca Cola it has evolved from being a simple beverage to a globally recognised symbol of happiness and joy. By commodifying the emotional experience that is tied to the brand, Coca Cola has been able to transform not only the product but the idea of being a refreshment into something that is marketable.

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<sup>20</sup>J. Pennington, ‘Colour Psychology: How Colour Affects Your Brand | Childsey’ (Childsey.com2024), <https://www.childsey.com/blog/the-role-of-colour-in-branding-and-marketing>, accessed 20 July 2025.

<sup>21</sup>B. Lischer, ‘Ignyte Branding Agency’ (Ignyte23 July 2024), accessed 20 July 2025.

<sup>22</sup>T. Carvalho, ‘Colour Theory in Branding: How the Right Colours Can Boost Your Brand | Delivered Social’ (Delivered Social18 March 2025), <https://deliveredsocial.com/colour-theory-in-branding-how-the-right-colours-can-boost-your-brand/>, accessed 20 July 2025.

<sup>23</sup>A. Zbooker, ‘GENDER BASED MARKETING: HOW BRANDS USE the POWER of COLORS to PERSUADE YOU’ (Medium24 September 2017), <https://namegenderpro.medium.com/gender-based-marketing-how-brands-use-the-power-of-colors-to-persuade-you-5f47bfa2b7e3>, accessed 10 July 2025.

<sup>24</sup> Primary research, Questionnaire

This idea is reinforced in the questionnaire, where respondents were asked to respond to how a smoothie brand advertisement made them feel through their use of colour. The brand used a light orange colour to symbolise the fruit orange and mango. Both male and female respondents described the product as looking fresh and healthy.<sup>25</sup> The brand used the colour orange to create an association for the consumers to identify their personal emotions and feelings towards smoothies.

Brands play on gender stereotypes in order to appeal to either male or females. In advertising, brands often leverage the way people associate specific colours with feelings, intentionally using colours that align with the emotions they want to evoke.

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<sup>25</sup> Primary research, Questionnaire



### Chapter 3

#### *The power of colour psychology and its ability to connect across cultures*

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Colour is more than just a visual, it is a symbolic language that transcends cultural boundaries. Through the media, symbolic languages are able to be expressed, enabling diverse cultures to access, interpret and respond to colour. The commodification of colour has led to brands needing to be more strategic and culturally sensitive to how they use it as the meanings differ across cultures. Different cultures attribute diverse meanings and symbols to colours, influencing their interpretation and significance in branding and societal contexts, necessitating cultural sensitivity and adaptation in global marketing campaigns. Colour meanings are not biologically determined rather they are socially constructed over time to create meaning and shape morals. These social constructs arise from cultural norms, cultural traditions, gender stereotypes and historical contexts. Each culture uses colour to create gender based associations depending on their values and how traditional they are. It is important for people to have an understanding of the colour meanings held in different cultures so that we are able to communicate effectively. Without this cultural awareness and sensitivity, communication globally can become ineffective and offensive. By recognising and embracing these differences in colour meanings within culture it enables more meaningful, inclusive, and impactful cross-cultural partnerships with a more recognised social and cultural literacy.

Our eyes can perceive up to 10 million colours.<sup>26</sup> The media has globalised understandings of different cultural meanings and identifying the use of different colours to promote cultures. In India, the colour red holds multifaceted symbolism, representing prosperity, fertility, and purity in Hindu culture. Conversely in South Africa, red is associated with mourning and loss, reflecting its use in traditional funeral attire. These colours are influenced by cultural norms, traditions, values and historical contexts. In India the historical context of the

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<sup>26</sup>R. Mukamal, See In, 'How Humans See in Color' (American Academy of Ophthalmology 8 June 2017), <https://www.aaopt.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/how-humans-see-in-color>, accessed 5 July 2025.

colour meaning of red was influenced by Ancient Indian scriptures that described the powerful deities and kings adorned in red, embodying courage and valor.”<sup>27</sup> For South Africa the colour red represents mourning and loss linking to the Apartheid era of bloodshed.<sup>28</sup> This historical context reinforces the colour meanings creating value for diverse cultures. Colour meanings through many cultures have become increasingly globalised due to the media, creating change through homogenisation of culture. Homogenisation relates to colour in that many meanings for different cultures have become similar. Media and technology has propelled cultural homogenization, where local cultures adopt elements from dominant cultures. One of the “most concerning impacts of cultural homogenization is the erosion of cultural diversity”.<sup>29</sup> The Western world specifically has had a significant influence on other cultures. This cultural homogenisation is seen through colour as cultures may alter their colour meanings to be more globally recognisable. As such, cultural meanings can become lost and can further diminish cultural heritage and a sense of identity for individuals and communities. These changes have no doubt been influenced by tourism and multicultural societies where there is one dominant culture which is expressed within the society.

Colour holds significance not only across countries but also within belief systems and varies with each belief system, making it important in understanding and in raising cultural awareness. Belief systems often align with unique symbolic meanings and values to colours based on their religious principles. Red's meaning and function within the Christian and Hindu religions are distinct, revealing the different ways in which colour is integrated into religious life, social behaviour and lifestyle. This colour highlights the distinctions between religious group affiliations, which are evident in moral standards, gender roles, and cultural customs. The female interviewee talked about how red in the Christian faith

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<sup>27</sup>N, Guzman. ‘What Is the Significance of Red in Indian Culture?’ (Casa Amarosa 31 July 2023), accessed 29 June 2025.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Cultural and Traditional Mourning Colours around the World’ (Willed2025), <https://www.willed.com.au/guides/cultural-and-traditional-mourning-colours-around-the-world?srltid=AfmBOor2hrobee7FPwIFXUaeOyyr0pINHK6S8vHdRw5ufp9JiYU99iFI>, accessed 29 June 2025.

<sup>29</sup>A, Canny. ‘Globalization and Its Impact on Cultural Homogenization: A Comprehensive Analysis’ (2024) 12 Sociology and Criminology, <https://www.longdom.org/open-access/globalization-and-its-impact-on-cultural-homogenization-a-comprehensive-analysis-110068.html>, accessed 20 June 2025.

symbolises “blood, sin, sacrifice and redemption”.<sup>30</sup> Whereas red in the Hindu faith, “is the color of the Hindu goddess Durga, who represents feminine power, vanquished evils and new beginnings”.<sup>31</sup> Hence, the Hindu faith has created gendered customs through the meaning of red, linking to women, specifically acting as a social signal for fertility and purity.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, red is worn by women as a mark of being married and loyal to their husbands.<sup>33</sup> Hence, colour in many religions can reflect and enforce gender hierarchies or stereotypes, for red in the Hindu religion it changes the way society functions. The colours are the same but its meaning within each religion holds different values that change the way that society uses and interprets that colour. Red serves as a moral anchor within both religions that guides people towards different spiritual ideals and social meanings.

Understanding different cultural values and being able to identify the colour meanings are fundamental to communication. Cultural variations define people's identity and how they behave. It is important for brands to be able to alter and adapt their use of colour to communicate a profound meaning within specific cultures, creating cultural sensitivity. During my time in “South Africa, I noticed how international brands altered their colour schemes through their clothing to reflect the unique cultural associations of colour within the local culture”, “often brands would integrate the South African flag colours”.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Dove has altered the colours used in marketing to align with Japan’s colour meanings. The interviewee noted this change when she said, “Dove, a global personal care brand, adapted its marketing strategy in Japan to align with the cultural symbolism of white”. By emphasising the purity of its products through its use of increasing white packaging, “Dove effectively communicates its brand values and resonates

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<sup>30</sup> Primary research, Interview

<sup>31</sup> ‘Color and the World’s Major Religions | Sherwin-Williams’ (Sherwin-Williams2024), <https://www.sherwin-williams.com/architects-specifiers-designers/inspiration/styles-and-techniques/sw-art-stir-color-religion>, accessed 30 June 2025.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Color Red Significance in a Hindu Wedding | CrystalView Weddings’ (Crystalview.com17 May 2023), <https://www.crystalview.com/blog/is-there-significance-to-the-color-red-in-a-hindu-wedding>, accessed 30 June 2025.

<sup>33</sup> D. Roy, ‘The Palette of Red: The History and Tradition of Wearing Red on Karwachauth’ (Shop Mulmul18 October 2024), <https://shopmulmul.com/blogs/blog/the-palette-of-red-the-history-and-tradition-of-wearing-red-on-karwachauth>, accessed 5 July 2025.

<sup>34</sup> Primary research, Personal reflection

with Japanese consumers.”<sup>35</sup> In a study about doves marketing strategy the JDO talked about how “femininity in Japan is key to beauty and is expressed by the term ‘Kawaii’”. For a Dove hair series they had changed the packaging to be “yellow” and “pale blue” to target female customers using Kawaii colours.<sup>36</sup> The importance of understanding cultural nuances in colour symbolism is demonstrated through Dove's cultural sensitivity contributing to its success in the Japanese market. As the world gets more interconnected, the ability to communicate successfully across cultural boundaries is becoming increasingly vital. Miscommunication towards different cultures can be seen through brands inability to alter the colours used in order to connect across different cultures. By improving one's social and cultural literacy, people can acquire cultural knowledge, and therefore communicate effectively.

Hence, colour is used across cultures to communicate specifically and create deeper and direct meanings. It is crucial that through the media, different cultures are able to express their colour meanings enabling diversity and to communicate effectively.

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<sup>35</sup> Primary research, Interview

<sup>36</sup> ‘Dove Japan – Packaging of the World’ (Packagingoftheworld.com 9 June 2015), <https://packagingoftheworld.com/>, accessed 29 June 2025.

## Conclusion

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This PIP has more than anything proven that colour is not just an aesthetic, but a fundamental force in shaping the way males and females interpret and react to colour. The PIP is more than just a project and it transcends the school experience, providing me with a deep understanding of the power colour holds within society.

Furthermore, through advancement of communication technologies such as social media, its globalisation and increasing use has fuelled the consumption of colour. Depending on the message the media is trying to communicate different colours will strategically be used to influence one's interpretation and reaction to colour.

In particular, chapter 1 provided me with reasons as to how we are affected by colour, psychologically and emotionally, providing me with valuable insights into how genders perceive colours differently. In addition, chapter 2 proved that colour is strategically used through branding and marketing to influence our interpretation and reactions leading to commodification and overconsumption of goods. Lastly, chapter 3 provided an in-depth understanding on colour psychology's ability to connect with culture, specifically, how different religions and countries create meanings of colour which are globalised through the media.

My focus group, correlated with the secondary research in uncovering the differences in perceiving and interpreting colour between both males and females, which further was supported by the questionnaire where the colour choices and emotional and psychological reaction differed between genders. Furthermore, my personal reflection and interview allowed me to synthesise personal experiences, providing me with examples of the impacts of media within branding and culture.

This topic was highly relevant to the society and culture syllabus, accommodating colour as a social construct that is constantly changing over time. Colour has further been commodified through the media to create new ways of interpreting it and increasing its consumption. Popular media has become paramount to

expressing colour and its power within contemporary society, which is often undermined.

So fourth, my PIP has reinforced the importance of time management and organisation of information in order to help me plan. I realised I should have stuck to the timelines given by my teacher. I further struggled to express all my ideas within the word limit, spending time cutting down words. However, I believe that these constraints ultimately enhanced the flow and quality of my writing, as they helped me refine, synthesise and prioritise relevant data, resulting in a more cohesive PIP structure.

As I reach the end of my PIP journey, I recognise that the PIP is much more than a school project, the PIP has given me a greater understanding of how colour works within our society, influencing how individuals behave and interact with their surroundings. Through the ongoing research and time spent in exploring this topic it has made me more socially and culturally literate, giving me a deeper understanding of how colour is interpreted differently by individuals. Furthermore, through the PIP I have been encouraged to notice colour choices within society that don't just create meaning but shape perception.

## **Annotated Resource List**

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### **Primary Research**

#### **Focus Group, conducted 10 March 2025 with both males and females**

The focus group consisted of 14 participants - 7 males and 7 females. A slideshow with stimuli, photos and questions was presented to the group, along with a double sided A4 worksheet for people to individually answer questions. There were 20 questions that spanned over 40 minutes. A question was given with an image of seven shades of red and I asked the participants how many shades they could see. Out of the 7 males 2 of them were able to guess how many shades there were, in comparison out of 7 females 5 of them were able to guess correctly. This was useful in my chapter 1 of how the results reaffirmed that girls can distinguish between shades better. A question that targeted gender perception and influence on feelings was, "How do the colours in the brand Victoria's Secret make you feel?" Both the male and female participants responded that it is very feminine through the use of pink and the contrast with black adds connotations to a luxury brand. This question was significantly useful in supporting the secondary research that a successful brand such as Victoria's Secret uses its colour to target a specific demographic. Some of the challenges in running the focus group were crowd control and ascertaining answers due to the participants' lack of ability to contribute to the larger group discussion and the temptation to speak in smaller groups. Bias was apparent due to peer pressure in conforming to others ideas and not feeling comfortable to express differences of opinions. The focus group research was reliable as it supported the secondary research in gender differences of perception of colour and the colour meanings used in brand advertising.

## **Questionnaire (Qualitative and Quantitative), published 10th of January 2025**

The questionnaire was useful for conducting exploratory research, obtaining both quantitative and qualitative information in relation to the way in which males and females are impacted by colour through communication. The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions that were both open and closed ended questions that provided me with data to respond to through my subtopics. Questions included, “How does this colour make you feel?” and "Which colour makes you feel more inclined to buy this watch?" The questions were targeted specifically towards my chapter 1 and 2 topic, which focused on the emotional and psychological impacts of colour and the way in which branding is communicated through colour to impact both males and females. This data was no doubt really helpful, but I would have liked to have more of the questionnaire focused on my chapter 3 topic on the influence of colour within cultures. Furthermore, some questions were very complicated and hard to interpret and analyse when writing my chapters. My results were useful with the mix between both genders and a variety of generations. The questionnaire had a sample size of 70 respondents, therefore the reliability of the questionnaire could have been improved with a larger sample size, with an equal amount of gendered and generational response. The bias within the questionnaire is seen through the respondents not representing the proportion of the world.



### **Interview, undertaken on the 20th of March, 2025, with a Community associate and a Visual Communication Designer**

I conducted two interviews, one with a Community associate and the other with a Visual Communication Designer. My interviewees had a considerable amount of prior knowledge on colour used within branding and cultures. The responses were useful for my 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter providing personal and professional opinions. When discussing and asking questions in chapter 1 I found that it was hard to talk about the science behind perceiving colour and how they felt it had impacted them. It was challenging to look through the cross-cultural perspective of gender because they were both female interviewees so I wasn't able to compare responses. The process of not only creating questions to answer, conducting the interview and transcribing the responses was no doubt time consuming. Yet, the information transcribed was to a great extent useful for providing me with new perspectives of the profound influence colour had created. The discussion on questions related to marketing through colour provided me with helpful insights and examples of brands that use colour to provoke a certain emotion or feeling. Hence, there was a branding and cultural bias, through the interviewees personal perspectives and interpretations of colour.

### **Personal Reflection, written on the 12th of March, 2025**

The personal reflection was useful in reflecting my own feminist perspective of how I have been impacted by colour. It is easy to have bias when undertaking my personal reflection as I used my personal experiences to provide examples of the way in which I was influenced by colour throughout my life. My personal reflection was particularly useful in chapter 1, where I discuss how I have been psychologically and emotionally influenced by colour. Furthermore, in chapter 3, I provide my cultural experience within colour meanings across countries and religions. Thus, from my experience, the media has significantly influenced colour associations further influencing the way individuals interpret and react to colour. The personal reflection wasn't just helpful in reflecting on my own experiences but interpreting and analysing why colour holds meaning and how it shapes the way we perceive and respond to communication.

## Secondary Research

**Aithor, 'Victoria Secret Target Market & Consumer Demographics'** (aithor.com 27 March 2024), <https://aithor.com/essay-examples/victoria-secret-target-market-consumer-demographics>, accessed 27 July 2025.

This website written by Aithor explores the ways which Victoria Secret targets women at certain age groups through their PINK LINE. This website targets people interested in marketing and how for a successful brand like Victoria Secret, it is able to effectively communicate to a certain demographic. The article synthesises secondary research to create clear reasoning of the ideas. The author concludes that the PINK LINE in particular grabs the attention of younger women. There is a weak amount of research, specifically primary research, although the reliability of this source is high, referencing a brand's strategies. Being proofread the accuracy of this article is improved. Being specific to Victoria Secret, it is useful in chapter 2 of my PIP where I draw examples of brands that effectively use colour to target a certain gender. Hence, Victoria Secret is a brand that base the colour pink off their target market and consumer demographics.

**Elliot, A. and others, 'Color and Psychological Functioning: The Effect of Red on Performance Attainment.'** (2007) 136 *Journal of Experimental Psychology General* 154, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17324089/>, accessed 22 July 2025.

This article focuses on the behavioral effects of colours in particular studying the colour red and how it causes a response of avoidance. The scientific basis of colour wavelengths illustrates how shorter wavelengths are more calming and longer wavelengths are arousing and it is crucial to deepening my understanding of the psychological effects of colour. Different colours are associated with different emotions and cultural events. However, the article reveals these associations to be contentious, whether stimulated through external social influence, preference biologically, or a combination. The data was reliable in conducting its own experiments. It is also reliable because the participants came in unaware of the experiments, they were going to be tested on meaning the data is more controlled. They reported their motivation themselves which can be

unreliable because it's qualitative and biased. The repetition and number of experiments conducted makes it much more reliable. It is testing behaviours in a controlled environment which is reliable but inconsistent and is not relevant to real life situations. This article helps with my topic that is based on psychology by giving me information on the science behind colour and equipping me with knowledge on how colour is actually transported into our brains through wavelengths. In summary, it links to the themes of the science behind colours, the importance of colours and pracs involved in testing colours which relates to the subtopic of how genders drive emotions.

**Canny A. 'Globalization and Its Impact on Cultural Homogenization: A Comprehensive Analysis' (2024) 12 Sociology and Criminology, <https://www.longdom.org/open-access/globalization-and-its-impact-on-cultural-homogenization-a-comprehensive-analysis-110068.html>, accessed 20 June 2025.**

Cannie Aimie's article explores the positive and negative impacts of "Globalisation and its impact on cultural homogenization". Aimie's is part of the Department of Economics, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, Australia. The article explores how globalisation has driven cultural homogenisation through increased access to other cultures. Globalisation has been driven by "advancements in transportation, communication technologies and trade liberalization". This article is targeted towards people looking to understand sociology and components of changing culture. This source is reliable as it has been reviewed and revised, it also provides information that supports what other secondary websites have provided. This journal article is useful to my PIP by linking to chapter 3 on culture and how through cultural homogenisation of colour there is erosion of cultural diversity. Furthermore, the article is highly valid by offering reliable evidence for each argument.

**Carvalho, T. 'Colour Theory in Branding: How the Right Colours Can Boost Your Brand | Delivered Social' (Delivered Social 18 March 2025), <https://deliveredsocial.com/colour-theory-in-branding-how-the-right-colours-can-boost-your-brand/>, accessed 20 July 2025.**

Terence Carvalho is the Chief operating officer, who has spent 15 years in award winning years in hospitality. Carvalho's article includes a Q & A on colour theory and branding, answering all the frequently asked questions. The article is targeted

towards anyone who is interested in marketing, branding and looking to start their own business. Carvalho expresses that the colour theory is not decorative, it serves a purpose of shaping perception. The article further draws on visual images and examples of colours and brands that shape emotions and reactions. The information draws on secondary research that supports the importance of using colour theory. Carvalho's website is highly reliable, having experience in this topic means that he can explain and provide relevant reasons for colour's power. Concluding that the right colour combinations can enhance brand perception, visual appeal and increase engagement. Being written personally by Carvalho there is a bias towards the information provided.

**Ciotti, G. Help Scout, 'Color Psychology in Marketing and Branding Is All about Context - Help Scout' (Helpscout.com2024),**  
<https://www.helpscout.com/blog/psychology-of-color/>, accessed 19 June 2025.

Gregory Ciott article on "Color Psychology in Marketing and Branding is All About Context" talks about choosing the right colour and how it holds great importance. The article is specifically targeted towards marketing professionals and people who are interested in the practical application of colour psychology. Ciott makes many references throughout his writing providing more resources and more reliable information. This article is useful for my chapter 2 on branding and provides me with information on how brands may use colour to provide meaning and stand out and how by choosing the right colour it differentiates your brand. The information on how colour psychology influences emotions links to my chapter 1, this provided me with a deeper level of understanding within the colours and detailed statistics about them. This can be seen through the example of the inaccuracy of "green means calm", because that is not the only thing it stands to represent, it can also represent environmental issues. This creates a different perspective of colours and there meanings. This website is valid in that it draws on other secondary sources throughout the article and provides a link to external sources that relate to the context. There is bias through adding personal opinion and reflects the opinion of a business orientated platform.

**‘Color Psychology: See the Value for Marketing | USC MAPP Online’**

**(Usc.edu2023),**

**<https://appliedpsychologydegree.usc.edu/blog/color-psychology-used-in-marketing-an-overview>, accessed 2 June 2025.**

This article is very informative in providing information as to why personal factors influence colour psychology, how brands use colour to market and how colours create conversions. The intended audience for this website is people interested in learning about the power of colour and people interested in starting a business. The research methods in this text include the cross cultural perspective of gender and nationality and they have used secondary research methods in sourcing other articles to support the research. Specifically, referencing “marketing theory” and how it “reveals that consumers assess how appropriate a colour is to a brand when making a decision.” The website concludes that creating a colour that represents the brand and successfully creates a target audience is successful. Ultimately, using colour is one of the best ways that marketers can persuade consumers to make a purchase. This website article was very useful to my chapter 2 on colour psychology's influence on branding. It was also very reliable, with constantly adding in resources and references to other articles and statistics and being written by a university. Overall, this article was significantly useful in giving me an in depth understanding of colours power in targeting consumers and providing me with further links to other helpful articles.

**‘Color Red Significance in a Hindu Wedding | CrystalView Weddings’**

**(Crystalview.com17 May 2023),**

**<https://www.crystalview.com/blog/is-there-significance-to-the-color-red-in-a-hindu-wedding>, accessed 30 June 2025.**

The article written by Crystalview weddings is a wedding planning website that explores how the colour red is significant in the Hindu culture. The main argument of this article is that red has links to femininity and holds symbolic significance to the Hindu culture and how a colour can create meaning through the way of life. The article is intended to those who seek to understand Hindu culture and improve their social and cultural literacy and understanding. The author concludes that red holds significance to the Hindu culture as it signifies; marriage, love, fertility and strength influencing the way Hindus live and perceive

the world around them. This source is reliable as it is both a credible and peer-reviewed source that is written through a cultural perspective. This website is further useful for my PIP in particular chapter 3 giving me an example of a culture that uses colour to shape their meaning. Overall, the source adds cultural depth to my PIP exploring colour symbolism and how it creates a cultural identity.

### **‘Cultural and Traditional Mourning Colours around the World’**

(Willed2025),

<https://www.willed.com.au/guides/cultural-and-traditional-mourning-colours-around-the-world?srltid=AfmBOor2hrobee7FPwIFXUaeOyyr0pINHK6S8vHdRw5ufp9JiYU99iFI>, accessed 29 June 2025.

Ariella Birnbaum wrote this article on how cultural and traditional colours can have a variety of different meanings in different countries, specifically exploring which colours symbolise mourning. Birnbaum targets this website towards people wondering what to wear to a funeral that is in a different culture or people interested in understanding what different mourning colours represent in different cultures. There are many secondary links throughout this website that back up Birnbaum’s writing and provide the reader with extra information. Birnbaum concludes that by understanding the mourning colours in different countries you improve your social and cultural literacy by respecting other cultures' colour meanings. This website is further useful for chapter 3 of the PIP in linking to examples of different countries' colour meanings, how they have been formed and how they influence people's behaviour within society.

**Cuevas, N. Creative Design, ‘Cultural Influences Connected to Color - Nicté Creative Design’ (Nicté Creative Design 27 March 2017),**

<https://www.nictecreativedesign.com/color-theory/cultural-influences-connected-to-color/>, accessed 30 June 2025.

Through the website “Cultural Influences Connected to Color” it explores the ways in which colour is intertwined within cultures. Nicté Cuevas the author of this article directed it to people who work in design, marketing, branding and related fields who seek to enhance their social and cultural literacy in visual communication globally. The article presents qualitative research that has used other secondary sources to provide some information. Cuevas concludes that colour is not a universal language and it is important to be looked at within

different cultures in being more aware and sensitive if working in culturally diverse ways. The website is reliable being written by Cuevas who has worked with many well known businesses doing creative design. This resource is very useful for chapter 3 of my PIP that explores cultural significance through colour and chapter 2 how colour is seen in branding. This significantly relates to the PIP syllabus being an example of how you can see cross cultural communication. Hence, this website is very valid being written by people with professional experience and people within the industry.

**DigitalSynopsis.com, ‘The Psychology of Colors in Marketing (Infographic)’ (Digital Synopsis6 October 2016),**  
<https://digitalsynopsis.com/advertising/psychology-of-colors-in-marketing/>,  
**accessed 18 June 2025.**

Digital synopsis article presents ideas on the power of colour in marketing. The article goes through all the colours and the emotion they provoke and how that can be strategically used in marketing to create consumption of products. The article targets brands that are looking at creating a business and giving advice on how to effectively use colour to communicate and provoke a message. It is also a good website that is engaging and interesting for people to learn on how colour psychology is used in branding. The digital synopsis has provided statistics relative to the importance of colour in marketing with 93% of buyers focusing on visual appearance, 3% based on look and texture, and 1% on smell and sound. The authors concluded that ultimately colour in marketing is dependent on your target audience and good brands will be able to take cultural associations into account when choosing colours to market. The digital synopsis website is a reliable source- design focused that creates content related advertising. Although lots of the statistics and information is not cited with specific academic studies and do not have references to support its claims. The website significantly relates to my chapter 2 on how colour influences branding-helping me further have examples of brands that do effectively communicate through colour and how colours individually hold power. Hence, this website proved to be highly informative and visually engaging, in giving me resources and statistics to provide information for my chapter on branding and marketing using colour.

**DigitalSynopsis.com, ‘What Different Colors Mean and How to Use Them’ (Digital Synopsis 5 April 2016), <https://digitalsynopsis.com/design/color-psychology-meanings-usage/>, accessed 20 July 2025.**

The article written by Digital Synopsis explores the colour meanings of different colours through visuals to highlight the importance of knowing how to use colour. Digital synopsis is a design, advertising and creative inspiration website that provides helpful information clearly on the effects of colour. The article refers to colour psychology and the major role colour plays in our visual perception influencing our interpretation and reaction of the world. This is targeted towards web and graphic designers specifically and brands looking to explore how to advertise colour effectively. By using a visual infographic to display the information the website is more appealing for people to explore. The article subtly draws to the conclusion that colour is useful to advertising and by using it effectively it can improve brands appearance. There is potential bias in the website being a marketing website and promoting its own views on colour. Using information from one secondary source creates less reliability and accuracy of information.

**‘Dove Japan – Packaging of the World’ (Packagingoftheworld.com 9 June 2015), <https://packagingoftheworld.com/>, accessed 29 June 2025.**

The company JDO wrote and published this article on “Dove Japan” on the beauty brand dove and how it has effectively used colour to be direct to women in Japan. The intended audience for this website are businesses that are looking to be more culturally aware of how they can change their usage of colour to the best of their abilities. For the doves hair care market in particular they were able to use colour for the Japanese culture and those colours were in tune with Kawaii which is a girlish and sweet type of femininity. There are no specific research choices but the article is written off the observable design choices and cultural marketing trends of Doves packaging. JDO concludes that Dove has successfully created an aesthetic look using Kawaii colours, clean designs and associations with Japan's culture. The author outlines how Dove is able to adapt its appearance visually and culturally. The website packaging of the world is reliable in supporting other



secondary research I have found. The images of the hair care products were very useful in giving the reader an understanding of the brands visual appearance. This was relevant to my chapter 3 where I discuss the successful way brands have adapted their use of colour for different cultures. There is bias because it is promoting the brand dove. Hence, the website is accurate and references other secondary sources.

**Fider, N. and Komarova, N. ‘Differences in Color Categorization Manifested by Males and Females: A Quantitative World Color Survey Study’ (2019) 5 Palgrave Communications,**  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-019-0341-7>, accessed 30 June 2025.

This article was written by Nicole A. Fider and Natalia L. Komarova on “Differences in color categorization manifested by males and females: a quantitative World Color Survey study” investigates whether there are systematic differences between males and females in color categorization across diverse cultures. The intended audience is for students studying colour and want to learn more about whether the culture is different between genders. The author has employed a quantitative analysis by using data from the world colour survey referencing where the data has been taken from. The conclusions that were made by authors were that gender differences in colour categorisation is different and is culturally spread. Females generally have more nuanced distinctions, specifically within the green and blue spectrum, whereas males have a broader categorisation within colours. This suggests that there are differences for genders in the distinction of colours, which further supports my cross-cultural perspective being gender. The website was very useful in providing me with informative secondary research and sources that have been referenced that analyse some things to a greater extent.

**‘Gender Marketing: How Brands Show Ads to Men and Women’ (Social Media Marketing blog2025),**

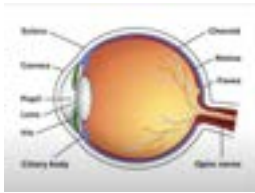
**<https://popsters.com/blog/post/how-men-and-women>, accessed 22 July 2025.**

This article displays the ways in which brands can strategically market to men and women based on how they interpret and react to colours differently based on their gender based decisions and behaviours. Targeting people looking to start their own brands and the ways in which they can target their specific gender. There is qualitative research that contains both primary and secondary research. There is secondary research through the references specifically to Louann Brizendine books and how she talks about the “male and female brain”. Where women are responsible for more of the decision making and men have better development for reaction to danger. They also use primary research through there content analysis of interpreting and analysing advertisements targeted at both males and females. The author concludes the powerful tool of marketing through directing it through associating a gender and how by understanding the differences in male and female behaviour it is easier to market effectively. The article uses references and citations from other sources, though it doesn’t have authorship making it hard to know how reliable the information is.

**Johnson, R. "The Psychology of Colour", Youtube, 5/11/2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7c0W5FZw64&T=158s>, 5/11/2024 - Google Search’ (Google.com2017), accessed 22 July 2025.**

Colours can make you feel a certain way because they provoke emotions. Warm colours are proven to pick your appetite. Pink can be perceived as a calming colour. The reason we pick certain colours to depict a specific meaning or feeling is because of our brain. We interpret these colours through the wavelengths of light. Every colour has a different wavelength meaning they reach our eyes in different ways, they transfer to our eyes as impulses. The part in the brain they reach is the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus does not just detect colour although it affects “functions like sleep and behavioral patterns, appetite and metabolism and body temperature”. Overall, this video on “The Psychology of Colour” illustrates the science of interpreting colour which will be a subtopic in my PIP. It talks about the way in which colour reaches your brain and that relates to my PIP

because it gives me background information into how that can change the way in which we perceive colours.



**Jones, N. ‘Color Is in the Eye, and Brain, of the Beholder’ [2022] Knowable Magazine,**  
[https://www.realclearscience.com/2022/11/01/color\\_is\\_in\\_the\\_eye\\_and\\_brain\\_of\\_the\\_beholder\\_862302.html](https://www.realclearscience.com/2022/11/01/color_is_in_the_eye_and_brain_of_the_beholder_862302.html), accessed 27 July 2025.

This article was written by Nicola Jones who suggests that colour is subjective and the way it is perceived is different for every person depending on lighting and colour. The article is targeted towards anyone that is interested in the ways people perceive things with interesting facts. The article contains many research methods that link to other secondary sources like “the dress” and other references to images. Nicola concludes that how the brain interprets colour is a mystery but there are many factors that affect the way you interpret colours. This source is very reliable, being published by well-known magazines from annual reviews which is a respected publisher and Nicola herself is a science journalist that draws on reliable sources. This article is useful to help create information for chapter 1 where I explore the psychology influences of colour and talk about the science behind perceiving it. At the start of my PIP I was looking at the dress and how people saw different colour combinations, so the link to that was helpful and the form of answering questions and making visual links was very useful. This article was highly valid and accurate as it supports other secondary research and it references images. Furthermore, there is no clear bias and this website was very helpful in providing me with specific information on science behind perceiving colour.

**Lischer, B. 'Ignyte Branding Agency' (Ignyte23 July 2024),**  
**<https://www.ignytebrands.com/>, accessed 1 June 2025.**

The persuasive power of colour is an article written by Brian Lischer, talks about what colour psychology is and how it is strategically used in brands to communicate a message. The intended audience is for anyone studying psychology that ones to understand how brands use colours successfully to associate with things. The author concludes that brands visual identity is how the world perceives that business and that colour is one of the most essential components of visual identity. The website uses statistics and uses a lot of secondary sources that support research I have found on colour. Lischer concludes that applying colour psychology is essential for effective branding. The website is reliable in being written by a CEO of a branding agency and provides clear visuals, statistics and images about colours used in branding. This topic is very useful in my chapter 2 that looks at colour and branding.

**Maybray, B. 'Color Psychology: How to Use It in Marketing and Branding'**  
**(Hubspot.com2022), <https://blog.hubspot.com/the-hustle/psychology-of-color>,**  
**accessed 15 June 2025.**

This article successfully illustrates how to use colour psychology in marketing. It portrays an assortment of different colours and how they influence personality and how different tones can create a completely different mood. The article gives many brand examples and how they use colour strategically to express an emotion. The intended audience is for people looking to start a new business and looking to see how companies use colour to influence their colour choice. The author insists that for entrepreneurs and people looking to create their own brand they should look to colour psychology as up to 90% of initial impression comes from colour. The article is a credible and informative source that is authoritative, has cultural considerations and practical insights. The images that use colour and visually illustrate how colour influences emotion is seen throughout the website. This specific topic relates heavily to chapter 1 and 2 because it talks about colours' influence on emotions and how brands market through colour to evoke those emotions.

**Mukamal, R. See In, ‘How Humans See in Color’ (American Academy of Ophthalmology 8 June 2017),**  
<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/how-humans-see-in-color>,  
accessed 5 July 2025.

Reena Mukamal journal article on how humans see colour explores the importance of colour and the science behind how colour is detected. Objects do not possess colour, rather they reflect the wavelengths of light that are seen by the human eye. The light is responded by two different types of cone cells that detect and respond to colour. These cones enable us to see and interpret colour further influencing our psychological and emotional reaction. Muhamal’s article is useful for the chapter 1 of the PIP where I explore how people are able to interpret and react to colour. The article uses statistics and secondary references to support the information. Being reviewed and written through a credible website this source is very reliable and accurate. The images of the structure of the retina provide visual imagery for explaining how the eyes perceive light and colour. Hence, the Mukamal article is highly informative and valid with its references and key statistics supporting other secondary research I have conducted.

**Noon, D. ‘The Pink Divide : Commodified Femininity, Gender Performativity and Identity’ (*Research Online*2025),**  
[https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses\\_hons/58/](https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/58/), accessed 12 July 2025.

DeeDee Noon is the author of the article on “The pink divide” who explores how pink has been divided as a social construct. The article explores how the colour pink has been submerged through the Western culture and submersion of media and has been commodified as a symbol of femininity. The intended audience is aimed towards people studying or have an interest in pink and factors that have contributed to its meaning. D.Noon has referenced other secondary sources that relate to the topic and has effectively displayed links to Judith Butler in particular and her gender theory. Noon concluded that the pink divide outlines a term to represent second and third wave feminists and that there are many conflicting values that have changed the identification of pink across time and technology. This journal is very useful to my PIP in providing me with information for my chapter 1, I explore the gender construction of colour and the influence of the media. This chapter specifically links to the pink and blue colours as associations

to gender and how they have become norms as femininity is commercialised through pink. This article was useful in giving me a specific analysis to the colour pink and by talking about how gender and media relates to this colour it linked even more to my PIP topic. This source is very valid and accurate being published by Edith Cowan University and written by Noon who has a bachelor of creative industries and it has been supervised twice. There is bias through the writing as it has been written from a feminist perspective influencing the source.

**Palmer, K. ‘Color and the World’s Major Religions | Sherwin-Williams’ (Sherwin-Williams2024), <https://www.sherwin-williams.com/architects-specifiers-designers/inspiration/styles-and-techniques/sw-art-stir-color-religion>, accessed 30 June 2025.**

Kim Palmer’s article refers to how colour is used and expressed in world religions. Kim Palmer has directed this article for designers and anyone who is interested in learning how specific religions use colour and create meaning from it. Palmer concludes that by understanding religious colour symbolism, designers are able to enhance designs. This source is moderately reliable as it has no references to other sources but it has a high level of usefulness through providing me with accurate examples of different religions being very specific to how the colours associate through beliefs and values that hold historical value. Through the categorisation of the different religions and the specific colour that holds meaning it made it really easy to draw out key information from the website. This website further links to my chapter 3 of the PIP when discussing colour psychology through culture, specifically religion. Being a painting website it can promote or use certain colours to promote itself, therefore creating a commercial bias towards the information provided.

**Pasmanter, N. and Munakomi, ‘Physiology, Color Perception’ (Nih.gov12 September 2022), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK544355/>, accessed 27 July 2025.**

Natalie Pamanter is a medical student focusing in neurobiology and physiology and Sunil Munakomi is a practising neurosurgeon. The article provides a scientific study into how humans perceive colour and focuses on the neurological processes within colour. The article was intended for people studying medicine or looking to

create a better understanding of how colour is detected. This article further draws information from peer reviewed medical studies. The author concludes that the retina and brain have various mechanisms that affect the ability to distinguish between colours. In order to understand the differences in colour perception with people Pamanter highlights that it is essential to understand the physiologic basis of vision. Hence, in order to understand the different effects of colour, it is important to understand the basics of colour vision.

**Pennington, J. ‘Colour Psychology: How Colour Affects Your Brand | Childsey’ (Childsey.com2024),**  
<https://www.childsey.com/blog/the-role-of-colour-in-branding-and-marketing>  
**, accessed 20 July 2025.**

James Pennington is a Creative Studio manager at Chilsey who has written this article on “The Role of Colour in Branding and Marketing”. Pennington’s core argument is that colour shapes brand identity and personality. The article is directed towards marketing professionals or people looking to create a brand. His article uses qualitative and advisory research methods that align with his brand research. Although it lacks references to other secondary research, this is a credible secondary source being written by an experienced marketing professional. The information is useful to my chapter 2 of the PIP when discussing the importance of colour as a visual shorthand for company’s positioning, personality and values. Linking to chapter 1 it talks about how colours influences emotions and behaviours, and that up to “90%” of judgments of a product can be based on colour. Overall, this article provides qualitative information on colour and how it is not just about making things look good, it’s also about influencing emotions and perceptions.

**Roy, D. ‘The Palette of Red: The History and Tradition of Wearing Red on Karwachauth’ (Shop Mulmul18 October 2024),**  
<https://shopmulmul.com/blogs/blog/the-palette-of-red-the-history-and-tradition-of-wearing-red-on-karwachauth>,  
**accessed 5 July 2025.**

TOI Lifestyle Desk wrote this article about the history and tradition of wearing red. The article is directed towards people who want to gain an understanding of why red is significant and what purpose it holds in Indian culture. Red is often associated with fertility, auspiciousness and prosperity in Indian culture and is

believed to bring happiness. The colour red doesn't just hold meaning but it has historical significance from having a bridal association to Karwa Chauth. This article has used other secondary research to quantify the information on the history and culture behind the colour red. Concluding, red still remains a significant colour in the Indian culture holding meaning to marriage and the way people view the world around them. The source offers authentic cultural contexts but it has no secondary references that support the information. Overall, this website is significantly useful to my chapter of the PIP, contributing the Indian culture as an example of how colour provides meaning through culture.

**The Marketing Hustle, 'A Guide to Color Theory: Your Marketing Advantage. - the Marketing Hustle - Medium' (Medium 17 January 2024), <https://medium.com/@dplayer/a-guide-to-color-theory-your-marketing-advantage-c1348fe1ea4c>, accessed 22 July 2025.**

"A guide to Colour Theory" is an article written by The Marketing Hustle about colour theory and how it plays an important role in shaping human experiences. The colour theory is not just about a wheel of colours, it has much more meaning. The colour wheel uses science to delve into how humans perceive colour. It highlights how colour can provoke feelings and emotions. For example warm colours like yellow, orange and red can create a feeling of warmth, heat and sunlight. This creates a human emotion of happiness. Designers can feel empowered by colours and enable them to make the viewer feel emotions towards a particular thing. Colours can be highly important when marketing for brands because it can hold significance, capture brands identity and can establish a brand. This article can hold bias because the person writing it writes about their own opinion and what they know. It is relatively reliable because the author has qualifications in marketing strategies, creative thinking and brand building. The content is factual and valid because what he spoke about backs up information I have read in other articles. This article links to the important theme of colour psychology and perception and the science behind colours which is important for my discussion of how brands show themselves on social media and the strong links to gender applications in my overall PIP.



Torres, N. 'How Colors Affect the Way We Feel - the Decision Lab' (The Decision Lab2024),  
<https://thedecisionlab.com/insights/society/how-colors-affect-the-way-we-feel>,  
accessed 23 July 2025.

Colours affect our mood, emotions and perceptions. They can provoke both positive and negative emotions through the way we perceive them. These emotions can be determined through the colour brightness and saturation. "A study of the Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD) emotion model by Mehrabian & Russell in 1974 demonstrated that color brightness can increase pleasure and decrease arousal and dominance." Colour saturation has been found to increase one's mood. Soft blues and greens help to subdue stress because of the emotions those colours symbolise and hold. Individuals' responses to colours can be different, which is noted in the article. This does mean that some information may not be correct. This article has a relatively high validity because it uses research and experiments from other reliable sources. It is very useful in helping me have an idea on colour brightness and saturation and how they have an effect on our emotions and mood. It also gave me insights into how different colours provoke different feelings. This article links to my PIP on how colour can drive emotional responses as it talks about the mood and how that changes depending on how we perceive the colour. Which then ties into the topic of gender applications and the way in which genders can see colour differently.



**Thenisch, P. “the Hidden Power of Colours”, Youtube, 5/11/2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjRfhanEsnw>, 5/11/2024 - Google Search’ (Google.com2023), accessed 22 July 2025.**

Colours can hold our experiences which can provoke feelings and emotions. The most popular colour in the world is blue because people place a positive memory on it. Although not everyone can have the same perception of colour. Men and women see red differently due to women having two chromosomes. Colours can be effective in helping us memorise things and we remember things for the colours we can picture not texts or symbols. Colours can help us communicate without words, which in turn can be an effective form of communication. In this Ted Ed talk there were lots of facts presented to the audience which meant there was less biasness because it wasn't opinionated. This video helped me create an understanding of how important colours are and how they can create different perceptions for people. It was very useful in equipping me with information about specific facts on the human interpretation of colour. Ted Ed talks are valid, with the information they share said to be 100% credible. This video focuses on the science behind colour which will inevitably provide me with evidence supporting my PIP idea that colour does shape identity formation. For one of my subheadings, I will talk about the science behind colour because it is important to know how people perceive colour.

**Whittaker, A. ‘Unlocking the Psychology of Colour: How Brands Use Colour to Connect with Consumers’ (Major Digital9 August 2023), <https://majordigital.com/articles/unlocking-the-psychology-of-colour-how-brands-use-colour-to-connect-with-consumers>, accessed 20 July 2025.**

Andy Whittaker is a digital marketing professional that has written this article on “Unlocking the psychology of colour” explores how colour is strategically used in branding, to evoke specific emotions and understanding its theory. This article is targeted towards people looking to start their own brand or for marketing. The article uses research methods, like secondary sources to help support information. The use of visual imagery to display examples of brands use of colour is effective in deepening the readers understanding of effective colour use. Whittaker concludes that colour plays an integral role in the way a consumer perceives a brand therefore making colour choice critical to advertising and success. He also

suggests that colour should not be randomly chosen and that it is important to choose colours that build on brand messaging and target audiences. This article is a reliable source that guides business choices and references information from secondary sources. Overall, the information provided in this article provides relevant statistics to colour in branding, further relating to my chapter 2. The article has shown some bias through being a branding website and not going into full depth of how colour influences perception.

**Wolfgang von Goethe, J. ‘Theory of Colours’, John Murray, 1810, 309,**  
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50572/50572-h/50572-h.htm>, accessed 20  
**June, 2025.**

Objects can appear differently depending on the properties of substances and surfaces they appear on. This closely links with the lighting of an object because if there is different lighting then different colours can be seen. Theory of colours highlights the emotions provoked by different colours. The characteristics that have been described to comprehend colour can be put into three rubrics; the powerful, the soft and the splendid. To test the reliability of the book it needs to be specific. The information was reliable supporting other secondary sources that have been read. This book is not completely reliable because it is old although it is valuable in exploring the theory of colours and the information is valid. Theory of Colours links to the way in which you perceive colours can inevitably provoke emotions. This is important because it ties into my subtopic of how colours drive emotion for men and women and impact their choices. This helps with my overall topic by giving reasoning to how colours may have an impact on everything we do.

**Yang, J and Shen, X. ‘The Application of Color Psychology in Community Health Environment Design’ (2022) 2022 Journal of Environmental and Public Health, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9436572/>, accessed 22 July 2025.**

Jicheng Yang and Xiaoying Shen explore how colour is a part of human life and an important component of the community environment. The article explores how colour plays an important role in design by influencing emotions and behaviour

and in order to create a successful design environment it is crucial to understand the psychology of colour. The article is intended to people interested in environmental psychology and the role colour plays within that. It is also targeted towards designers and architects that may use this information to help transform their designs to be more meaningful. Throughout this article there are secondary links to other sources and the authors also used survey results to help support their information. The results from the survey were also visually displayed. The authors concluded that “colour can be reflected as a language in the human neurological system”, influencing people's emotions and behaviour. As a result when colour is used in community environmental design, the colours used will have “distinct effects on peoples psychology, physiology and mood.” This source is highly reliable being peer-reviewed and published through a reliable and reputable journal, called National Library of medicine. This source is significantly useful for my Chapter 1, contributing to how colour affects our psychological and emotional reactions, linking to the environment. The visual graphs creates a better understanding of the information through statistical analysis. This article further deepened my conceptual understanding of colour beyond science and linked to identity and society.

**Zbooker, A. ‘GENDER BASED MARKETING: HOW BRANDS USE the POWER of COLORS to PERSUADE YOU’ (Medium24 September 2017), <https://namegenderpro.medium.com/gender-based-marketing-how-brands-use-the-power-of-colors-to-persuade-you-5f47bfa2b7e3>, accessed 10 July 2025.**

Alex ZBooker’s article refers to the role in which colours play within brands and advertising. Colour within branding can often be targeted through gender and understanding colour psychology can play a large role attracting the right consumer. Zbooker targeted this website to people interested in colour's role in branding and for people to improve their marketing skills, specifically entrepreneurs or marketers. The website effectively uses qualitative visuals to help provide readers with a deeper understanding of colours. The article links to my chapter 2 when discussing how through strategic use of colour brands can target a specific demographic. Hence, “Gender Based Marketing” has been helpful in providing me with insights in how brands can not only target you but also persuade you into consuming their products.