One of the most controversial topics in web design is the issue of color. This subject attracts a great deal of attention, based on the notion that the color of an object can affect the way we feel about that object. Will a red CTA (call to action) button result in higher conversion rate than a green one? A lot of web designers are troubled by questions of this nature.

**Psychological Insights**

Color is shown to be a significant determinant for both website trust and satisfaction. Color has the potential to communicate meaning to the user and influence the visitors’ perception through priming effect.

The exposure to one stimulus influences the way one will respond to another stimulus. In that way the exposure to a certain color can influence the visitor’s reaction towards the site in a carryover effect, meaning that the emotional reaction towards a color can be translated to positive or negative interaction with the website.

**Our Reactions to Color are as individual as our Experiences**

There have been numerous (unsuccessful) attempts to classify consumer responses to different individual colors. Those findings reveal that the reaction towards color is effected by personal experiences so it can't be universally translated to specific feelings. Our reaction to color is not absolute, there is no collective preference for one color over another, and there is very little evidence to support that ‘green’ CTA will universally make people purchase a product more often than ‘yellow’.
Let’s look at the CareLogger case study, they ran an A/B test for their health application, they tested sign-up CTA buttons in two different colors, the purpose was to find which of the CTA’s attracts more clicks.

“After 600 signups with the exact same CTA and just a different button color, the red button saw 34% more conversions than the green”.

These results might lead most designers to conclude that the green CTA leads to higher conversion rate but this conclusion is wrong as it is based on partial information, thus does not reflect the complete picture as the following example demonstrates; an analysis conducted for one of our clients, revealed interesting behavior.

The blue CTA increased the conversion rate by 20%.
Persona, more than Color, affects the conversion

A deeper look on the heatmaps of this page revealed that the true reason for the difference in conversion was due to the buyer persona rather than the color. Visitors that did not convert (Left side heatmap), show a different pattern of behavior; they were more detail oriented, spent a lot more time on every piece of information, and their engagement time was higher.

On the other hand, visitors who converted (right side heatmap) tended to be more ‘impulsive’ buyers, quickly completed the form, spent less time on the page and were less focused on the details.

Thus, color alone can’t explain the variance in the visitors’ behavior; there is a lot to consider before jumping into conclusions.

Use Color in its Relevant Context

An article about *The Interactive Effects of Colors* explores the relationship between brands and color hinges on the perceived appropriateness of the color being used for the particular brand. Anthony G. Greenwald and his colleagues observed that people make connections much more quickly between pairs of ideas that are already related in their minds than between pairs of ideas that are unfamiliar. An example for such cognitive association is the strong link that we have between “man” and “soccer” or “women” and “makeup”. It means that when we view the word “soccer”, we will react faster when presented with the word “man” compared to the word “women”. We are primed to connect “man” and “soccer” and “women” and “makeup” due to their strong connections in our mind. These connections were developed through the socialization process and are culture-related.
Our associations for colors were learned in the same way that we have learned associations for any other concepts in our life. Our reactions towards colors stem from the conditioned links between a certain color and what this color represents. Colors evoke a variety of associations without prior conditioning – we can use the associations that already exist in our mind. Thus, if pink is automatically linked to pretty little girls, this well established connection can be used to communicate a brand’s desired image in the consumer’s mind (Madden et al., 2000). For example, if a new website for girls wear uses pink, it actually takes advantage of everything that this color stands for.

The color appropriateness

Another factor that affects our reaction to color is the color appropriateness which means “the ease with which the target comes to consumers’ minds and pertains to the processing of meaning.” Therefore, we infer that congruent color-product combinations will be processed more fluently (Lewis and Walker, 1989) and will be liked more and rated as more appropriate, than incongruent combinations. In other words, the appropriateness of a certain color, is much determined by its context, and not just by the visitor’s preference to specific color.

Conclusion: No Hard and Fast Rules

There is no set of rules that can guide you through the process of choosing the right color for your websites. But, color should be connected to the specific message one wants to convey. Black can fit nicely for a business website but not to a wedding website for example. The usage of a specific color should try to take advantage of our past experiences and rely on our existing associations and most importantly - be congruent with the product.

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