

The Psychology of Color in Advertising: A Secondary Review of How Color Influences Children's Attention, Preferences, and Consumer Choices

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Abstract

Colors represent some of the most powerful tools applied in advertisement, especially in the case of children. This research paper focuses on the effect of color psychology on children's attention, emotions, memories and product preferences. The work analyzes color meanings and cultural symbolism, their application in advertisement and packing and color use in marketing. The results of the research show that children react stronger to bright and saturated colors than to muted ones, developing emotional bonds with particular products and brands. Moreover, colors affect children's attitudes towards food, toys and other products and form their preferences before critical assessment takes place. Furthermore, colors are widely used for brand recognition and digital advertisement campaigns aimed at promoting engagement and purchases. Therefore, although color represents a powerful and creative marketing tool, it demands an ethical approach towards its use in children's advertisement.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Colour is the most crucial sensory cue when it comes to setting a consumer's expectations about the taste and flavour of food. From the rich red of a ripe strawberry to the golden brown of a baked loaf of bread, colours have the power to arouse an appetite, create cravings, and also shape your perception of taste.

On a subconscious level, people expect certain flavours to match particular colours and thus this evokes specific emotions. Which is why consumers will subconsciously stop paying attention to food advertisements that conform to our deep-seated psychological associations with colour. It's a make or break! Sure, there are exceptions, but ads have to then tap into emotional prompts that are stronger than food colour. For instance, Burger King ran an advertisement with a moldy Whopper that sat around for 34 days. This showcased how they took out artificial preservatives from their burgers.

While the ad wasn't exactly mouth-watering, it made a big deal about the freshness and quality of Burger King's ingredients. Plus, it highlighted the brand was cutting out health risks linked to eating preservatives. When something looks like it might endanger our safety, it wins over color appeal any day.

1.2 Why Children Are Important Consumers

Children are particularly attuned to vibrant colours. Studies show that infants, even 4-5 months old, start reacting to bold hues, which seem extra appealing to their developing vision. As they grow, this love for vivid shades stays strong. Ever wandered down a toy aisle? The first things you notice are usually super colorful packages with blazing reds, blues, yellows, and greens.

To children, these bright colors are like magic. They cannot resist the shiny visuals that jump out at them. For some packaging, you might have seen popular cartoons and TV show characters used to market the product and gain a larger consumer network or target audience towards the sale of those products. For example, Kinder Joy; a chocolate brand idealated for children, markets the brand by using well known Tv shows, Cartoons, etc. by incorporating them as a limited edition series. Which gains thousands and thousands of customers.

1.3 Problem Statement

Advertisers strategically use bright and attractive colors to capture attention and make products look more appealing. While adult consumers can usually spot these marketing tactics, children lack the knowledge that it's actually the persuasive intent behind visual design. They often perceive these colors as a natural part of the product rather than a deliberate tool engineered to influence their choices.

This gap in knowledge makes children highly vulnerable to commercial manipulation. Therefore, there is a clear need to study exactly how color affects children's attention spans and product preferences. Investigating this relationship will help researchers, parents, and policymakers understand how visual marketing shapes youth consumer behavior and establish better guidelines for ethical advertising.

1.4 Research Objectives

To understand how color psychology is used in advertising. To examine how colors influence children's attention and emotions. To review how colors affect children's product preferences and buying choices. To explore ethical concerns related to color use in advertising for children.

1.5 Research Question

The central research question guiding this study is: How does the use of color in advertising influence children's attention, emotional response, and product preferences?

Chapter 2: Understanding Color Psychology

2.1 Meaning of Color Psychology

The impact of color on human life extends beyond aesthetics. Color affects psychological states, decision-making, and even physical health. Research has shown that certain colors can increase focus, reduce anxiety, enhance creativity, or even affect one's appetite. (Arora, C. 2024 & Warsi, S. 2024). It explores how different hues, shades, and tones can trigger specific emotional and physiological responses, shaping everything, from our daily moods to our purchasing decisions.

For example like the emotion excitement & urgency; bright warm colors like red or orange often increase alertness. They are heavily utilized in marketing to stimulate desire and create an immediate sense of urgency.

To create trust & calmness in cool colors like blue and green have a soothing, stabilizing effect that reduces stress. This makes them a staple in healthcare, finance, and technology to convey reliability and tranquility.

2.2 Brief History of Color Psychology

Colors have been studied as a blend of science, emotion, and cultural meaning, evolving from ancient theories to modern applications. In Art, artists study color theory to evoke specific moods and create visual harmony. By understanding how colors interact, they can subtly guide a viewer's eye across a canvas. This allows creators to establish a clear focal point and trigger immediate emotional responses. In Branding Businesses use color to build instant global recognition and communicate their core identity. Studies in color psychology reveal how specific hues prompt highly targeted emotional reactions.

In Medicine Color plays a vital, practical role in healthcare as both a diagnostic and therapeutic tool. Med-

ical professionals analyze shifts in skin tone to detect underlying physical illnesses. In Culture Anthropologists study how identical colors carry vastly different meanings across global societies. For instance, white represents purity in the West but symbolizes mourning in many Eastern cultures. These deep symbolic associations are rooted heavily in local traditions, history, and language. In Marketing marketers rely on consumer research and A/B testing to analyze how color drives purchasing choices. They use these data insights to optimize advertisements, packaging appeal, and website layouts. This ensures the chosen color palette aligns with audience expectations and prompts direct action.

2.3 Common Emotional Meanings of Colors

Colors act as powerful psychological tools, instantly triggering emotional and physiological responses. Understanding these basic associations allows you to leverage color effectively in design, branding, and daily life. For example, Red excites the mind and body. It drives urgency, stimulates hunger, and radiates high energy, making it a staple for clearance sales, fast-food branding, and call-to-action buttons. The colour Yellow, commands visual attention faster than any other color. It is universally linked to happiness, optimism, and warmth, often used to evoke cheerfulness or caution. Blue: Lowers heart rates and is heavily associated with trust, calmness, and safety. It is the go-to color for corporate institutions, banks, and tech companies aiming for reliability. Green: Directly tied to the outdoors, nature, and vitality. It represents health, freshness, and growth, frequently utilized in organic, wellness, and financial brands. Black: Exudes sophistication, luxury, and power. It creates a sense of mystery and seriousness, making it ideal for high-end fashion, premium products, and sleek, modern aesthetics. White: Symbolizes simplicity, cleanliness, and purity. It provides high contrast and a sense of breathing room, which is why it is heavily favored in minimalist design and healthcare settings.



2.4 Cultural Meaning of Colors

Colors communicate strong messages, but their meanings vary drastically across the globe, which means advertisers need to have an intimate understanding of their target culture or risk. making it costly. What works for a brand in one country can alienate consumers in another. Here is how specific colors are perceived across different regions.

White	China	color of mourning and death. Western countries on the other hand use the white color on
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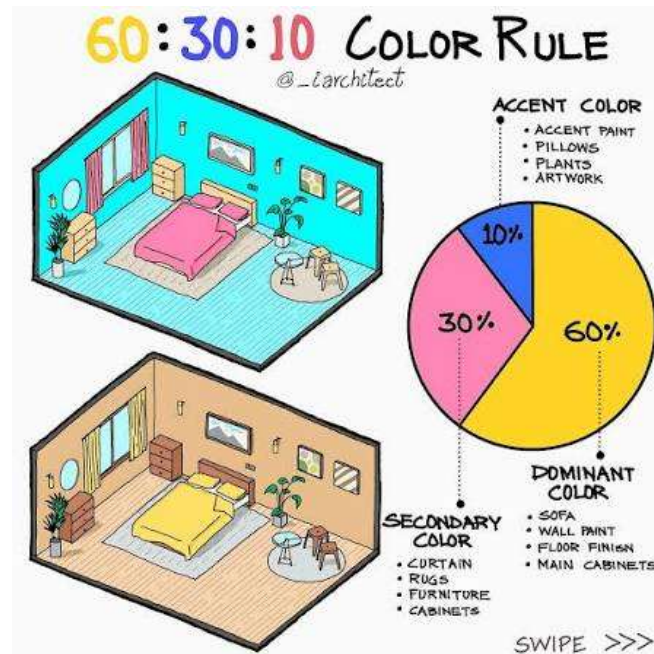
	Western	special occasions such as weddings.Since it’s associated with cleanliness, elegance, and purity, thus the white wedding gown is ideal for such occasions (Onkarnath. et al. 2025)
	Egypt	Associated with wealth, richness, and a high social status due to the historical difficulty of keeping white fabrics pristine in the desert.
Red	North America	Associated with passion, romance, danger, and urgency.
	South Africa	Associated with mourning. In the context of the South African flag, red specifically honors the blood shed and violence during the struggle for freedom.
	india	Symbolizes purity, beauty, sensuality, and fertility. It is the most auspicious color for Hindu weddings
yellow	Japan	Represents courage, wealth, and refinement. This meaning dates back to the 14th-century Ounin War, where warriors wore yellow chrysanthemums as a symbol of bravery.
	Germany	Associated with jealousy and deceit, often differing from the warmth attributed to it in neighboring Western countries.
	Canada	Associated with cheerfulness, warmth, and hospitality, but also used as a cautionary color for traffic lights and warning signs.
Green	Ireland	Symbolizes the entire country, its lush landscapes, and the Catholic nationalist tradition, famously represented by the shamrock.
	Saudi Arabia	Represents Islam, signifying life, unity, and the state, prominently featured on the national flag and its "Shahada" (Islamic creed)

2.5 Color Combinations and Color Harmony

In recent decades, scientists and researchers have begun controlled studies of colour harmony. While these studies are often contradictory, they all come to the conclusion that colour harmony can be established if colours have equal or similar chroma, the same hue or different lightness values. (Weingerl, P. et al. 2018) Brands intentionally use color combinations to shape how consumers perceive their products, guide their attention, and drive specific purchasing actions. Rather than choosing colors randomly, they build deliberate color schemes/palettes based on color theory to establish contrast, visual hierarchy, and emotion.

Designers maintain visual balance by distributing colors proportionally using the 60-30-10 Rule. The Base

which should be 60% is the dominant hue (usually neutral or a subdued brand color) that sets the overarching tone. Then comes the secondary which should be 30%. A supportive color that harmonizes with the base, used for secondary elements and headers. Lastly an Accent which should be 10% the high-contrast pop used for calls-to-action (CTAs) and highlights.



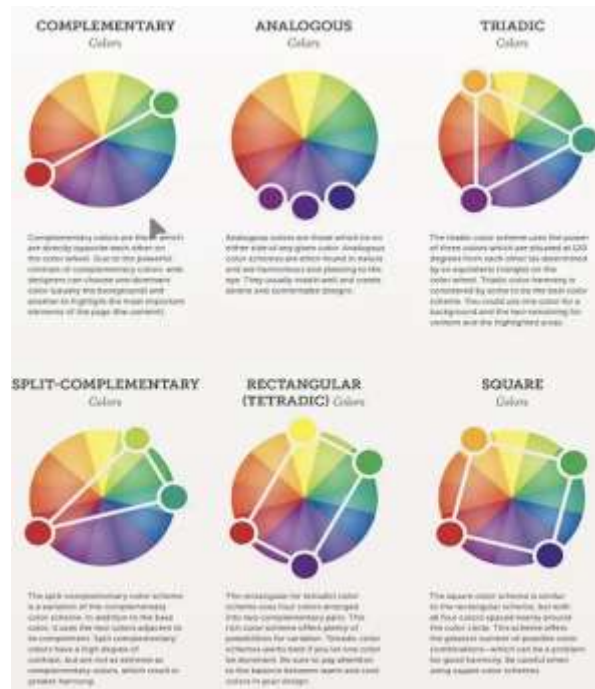
Color Harmonies & Their Applications

The relationships between colors on the color wheel dictate how they function together in a brand's visual identity

Complementary or High Contrast & Urgency colors pair colors directly opposite on the wheel (e.g., Blue and Orange). Because the contrast is so striking, this combination is abundantly used for promotions, clearance tags, and "Buy Now" buttons. It forces the eye to stop and focus. **Analogous or cohesion & calm colours** uses adjacent colors on the wheel (e.g., Blue, Teal, and Green). This combination mimics patterns found in nature and creates a seamless, peaceful visual flow. Brands use this to make products feel premium, organic, or calming (e.g., luxury skincare, meditation apps, or spas).

Monochromatic or Sophistication color utilizes various tints and shades of a single color. It delivers a sleek, organized, and elegant aesthetic, commonly used by high-end fashion labels or tech brands to establish an understated, premium presence. **Triadic or energy & Youth colors** employ three evenly spaced colors on the wheel. It provides striking contrast without the visual intensity of complementary pairs, making it ideal for brands targeting a younger, energetic demographic.

By strategically adjusting a color's brightness and or saturation, brands can tweak these harmonies. Desaturated, softer tones evoke reliability and trust, while bright, high-saturation combinations create immediate excitement and highlight discounts.



Chapter 3: Children's Attention, Emotions, and Consumer Psychology

3.1 How Children Notice Advertisements

Bright, bold, and contrasting colors are the primary visual elements that draw children to advertisements. Young children process high-contrast, primary colors faster than muted shades. Bright tones trigger feelings of energy, fun, and excitement. Distinct color combinations help children identify brands before they can read. Common Industry Examples could be, Toy packaging, Brands use neon greens, electric blues, and vivid pinks to stand out on crowded store shelves. Snack boxes, Fast-food and chip brands pair bright reds and yellows to stimulate appetite and create excitement. Candy wrappers, Confections use high-contrast rainbow palettes to mimic playfulness and sweet flavors. Cartoon media, Animation studios rely on heavily saturated characters to maintain focus during commercials.

3.2 Cognitive Abilities of Children in Different Age Groups

Briefly explain that younger children may focus more on appearance, color, cartoons, and packaging, while older children may begin to understand brands, price, and product quality better. Younger children primarily focus on superficial product features such as appearance, color, character packaging, and cartoons, whereas older children develop more sophisticated cognitive skills, enabling them to understand brand value, price-to-quality ratios, and product utility. Younger children are highly influenced by bright bold colors, shapes, and engaging visual aesthetics. There's a strong preference for products featuring familiar cartoons, mascots, or media characters. Brands focus heavily on immediate gratification and the physical packaging rather than the item's actual function.

However, Older Children begin to recognize and develop preferences for specific brands based on peer influence, advertising, and perceived social status. They become capable of comparing prices, evaluating product quality, and understanding basic concepts of value for money. Shift focus from how a product looks to what it actually does, how long it will last and based on their need or want for the product.

3.3 Colors and Children's Emotions

children process visual information rapidly, color choices heavily influence how they perceive the taste,

safety, and "vibe" of a product. Children have the most sensitive taste buds. Taste is separated into two categories: taste expression and tongue sensory expression. Japanese colorist Kojiro Naito has experimentally determined that sweet tastes are yellow, sour tastes are green, bitter tastes are black, and salty tastes are cyan. Tongue sensory is what we described as sour, sweet, bitter, spicy, and salty. (Shangwen, J. 2005).

Children like sugary foods, according to study. Smooth and soft foods are represented by lighter colors, while rich and hard foods are typically represented by darker colors. Accordingly, children's psychology and physiology are stimulated and suggested by color (Mead J A, Richerson R, 2018). Due to children having limited cognitive ability, compared to text, graphics are easier to read and be appealed towards. Therefore, packaging graphics not only convey food information and brand characteristics, but also attract children's attention. As graphics are one of the most important elements of packaging, designers should make full use of the intuitiveness of graphics and express the food abstractly in the form of images or directly apply a picture of food, so that consumers can understand food in an intuitive way and thus achieve emotional resonance.

3.4 Children's Product Preferences

Color psychology plays a major role in children's product preferences; often overlooking functional similarities. Even when two products are nearly identical, a child's choice is driven by visual cues that communicate excitement, approachability, and taste. This includes, brightness and contrast where children are naturally drawn to highly saturated, bright packages like primary reds, yellows, and blues. These colours stimulate visual attention and create immediate excitement on the shelf. Playfulness, like lighter, vibrant pastels or energetic neon accents often signal fun and entertainment. A playfully colored packet suggests the product inside will be enjoyable to use or eat.

And lastly the familiarity and taste association leads children to quickly learn to associate specific colors with flavors like yellow for lemon, red for strawberry, green for apple/sour. A package that features these familiar, appetizing colors will win out over a less recognizable option.

3.5 Pester Power and Parent Buying Decisions

Children directly influence family spending through pester power which is the persistent nagging or requesting of products that catch their visual attention. Even though children do not make the final financial transactions, their preferences heavily dictate household purchases, particularly in categories like toys, cereals, snacks, and apparel. Visual Appeal drives Pester Power because of firstly, eye-Level Marketing where brands intentionally place visually striking packaging like bright colors, engaging mascots, and licensed characters, on lower shelves where children can easily spot them. And secondly, emotional connection where children connect with packaging that features their favorite television, movie, or gaming characters, turning a routine shopping trip into an emotional desire rather than a logical one for instance, Mickey Mouse, Doc, Mcstuffins, Winnie The Pooh etc,

Marketers focus on "pester power" because targeting children is an indirect but highly effective way to tap into the adult wallet and attain rapid growing profits. When a child persistently asks for a specific item, parents often yield to avoid conflict, reward good behavior, or simply satisfy their child's happiness. This makes children vital stakeholders in family buying decisions, forcing brands to design products with dual-appeal, one that excites the child visually and one that reassures the parent of quality or value.

Chapter 4: Color in Advertising, Packaging, and Digital Marketing

4.1 Color in Food Packaging

Food brands strategically use color psychology to subconsciously influence your cravings, perceived flavors, and purchasing decisions before you even take a bite.

Brands use specific colors to shape what you taste and how you feel by using colours like red or yellow which stimulate excitement and appetite. Warm colors trigger a physical response by increasing your heart rate and creating a sense of urgency. Brands use this to make foods feel stimulating and delicious. For example Chip Packets; Companies like Lay's use bright red and yellow to make the savory, salty crunch feel bold and irresistible. Or Fast Food & Drinks; the combination is a staple for brands like McDonald's or Coca-Cola, designed to grab your attention instantly. Pink and purple resemble sweetness and fun These hues are strongly associated with sweetness, indulgence, and playfulness. For instance Candy Wrappers like Skittles, Starburst and Nerds use bold purples and pinks to signal intense fruit flavors and sugary treats. Or Colorful Cereal Boxes: Brands like Trix or Froot Loops rely on a rainbow of bright pinks, purples, and oranges on the packaging to make the product pop on the shelf and appeal directly to a sense of fun and sweetness.

Green is commonly associated with health and freshness. Green is universally linked to nature, vitality, and health. Drink Bottles like Smoothies, juices, and health-focused beverages like Juice or raw cold-pressed brands use vibrant greens to communicate that the product is fresh, organic, and nutritious. Blue is for a refreshing and thirst-quenching feeling While rare in natural solid foods, blue is heavily used to represent ice, water, and crisp refreshment. Drink Bottles like Bottled waters, sports drinks like Gatorade or Prime, and artificially flavored sodas use blue caps and labels to make the beverage look ice-cold and hydrating.

4.2 Color and Brand Recognition

Discuss how children may remember a brand because of its color. For example, a certain red, yellow, blue, or green design may become linked with a specific food, toy, app, or cartoon product. Children link colors to brands long before they can read, using vibrant hues as visual anchors to identify their favorite toys, snacks, and cartoons. This powerful cognitive connection shapes early consumer awareness and loyalty. Colors Trigger Brand Recognition because of High Visual Salience where children are naturally drawn to high-contrast, bright colors like red, yellow, blue, and green. These stimulate their developing brains and make certain logos pop out on crowded shelves or screens. Emotional Association where colors evoke specific feelings. Red creates excitement and urgency while yellow conveys happiness and friendliness. Simplification where toddlers process shapes and colors much faster than complex text or brand names. A Pink packaged barbie or a green tailed mermaid becomes an instantly recognizable symbol. Green is frequently associated with Xbox or the Nickelodeon slime splat, cueing specific gaming or television experiences. Signature Character Colors like The bright blue of Sonic the Hedgehog or the iconic yellow of SpongeBob SquarePants helps children instantly identify shows, games, and related merchandise.

4.3 Color and Price Expectations

Explain how colors can make a product look cheap, premium, fun, healthy, or luxurious. For example, black and gold may make something look expensive, while bright colors may make a product feel playful and affordable.

Color is a powerful psychological tool that instantly dictates a product's perceived value and personality before a customer even reads the price tag. different color palettes shape value and price expectations.

Premium & Luxurious Dominated by deep, rich, and high-contrast palettes like the Colors Black, matte gold, silver, deep navy, and rich jewel tones like emerald or burgundy. The product's effect they have is that it absorbs light and signifies exclusivity, craftsmanship, and heritage. Brands often use these to justify higher price points. What makes a product look Cheap & Accessible is when it frequently relies on high-saturation and high-energy contrasts. Like the Colors Bright yellows, electric blues, and vibrant reds. The Effect is that these grab attention quickly and feel highly approachable, making them perfect for impulse buys and everyday, budget-friendly goods Fun & Playful is associated with youthfulness and casual experiences. Colors like Pastels, coral, turquoise, and bright orange.

The effect that it has is that they create a sense of friendliness and low risk, signaling to the consumer that the product is entertaining, simple, and lower-priced. Healthy & Organic is rooted with nature and well-being. Colors like Earthy greens, soft browns, and crisp whites. The Effect is that These evoke feelings of purity, freshness, and sustainability, often allowing brands to charge a premium for ethical or natural qualities

4.4 Color in Digital Advertising

Discuss how websites, apps, online games, and YouTube ads use colors to guide attention. Bright buttons, banners, and pop-ups may push children to click, watch, or choose something. Digital platforms use vibrant colors, high contrast, and psychological triggers to strategically capture attention, with bright CTAs (Call-to-Action) and banners often designed to prompt immediate clicks or engagement. Especially from children, who are more visually responsive to saturated hues. The strategic use of color across different digital mediums functions in several distinct ways. Firstly, for websites and Apps, Designers utilize the 60-30-10 rule (60% background, 30% secondary, 10% accent) to make critical elements stand out. High-contrast, neon, or bright primary colors like red, yellow, or bright green are deliberately applied to "Buy Now," "Download," or "Subscribe" buttons to create a visual hierarchy that naturally draws the eye. Secondly, for online games, games employ hyper-saturated colors and glowing effects to create a sense of urgency, excitement, or reward. Brightly colored pop-ups, often featuring flashing animations or countdown timers are frequently used to trigger impulse purchases or push players toward premium upgrades. Thirdly, for YouTube Ads, Advertisers rely on color psychology and sudden visual shifts to break the monotony of content. Creators use vibrant colors in thumbnail designs and initial ad frames to force an immediate stop-scroll. Additionally, bright skip buttons are often in contrasting colors and are designed to be easily identifiable so users engage with the interface. Lastly, for Child-Directed Content, platforms targeting younger audiences heavily feature high-contrast, warm, and playful color palettes (e.g., bright pinks, sunny yellows, and sky blues). These colors are proven to stimulate excitement and joy, which can lower inhibitions and lead to impulsive decision-making, such as clicking on an ad or interacting with an in-game prompt.

4.5 Seasonal and Trend-Based Colors

Brands use seasonal and trend-based colors to trigger immediate emotional responses, that align with cultural celebrations, and create a sense of urgency that drives massive sales. By strategically tapping into color psychology, companies make their products feel relevant, timely, and desirable. Holidays have deeply ingrained color associations that brands leverage to build instant recognition and nostalgia. For example, near Christmas brands rely on the contrast of red (warmth, excitement) and green (nature, renewal). For instance, Coca-Cola heavily utilizes this pairing in the winter season advertisements campaigns to firmly cement its brand identity. Colors naturally influence how we feel temperature and mood. Brands adjust their visual merchandising accordingly. In Summer, if you've noticed marketing

shifts to bright, saturated colors like sunny yellows, ocean blues, hot pinks to evoke energy, vacation, and outdoor fun. And in Autumn or winter palettes transition to warm, muted tones like burnt orange, deep burgundy, forest green, and mustard yellow to bring the sense of coziness, changing leaves, and the holiday season.

Trends act as cultural shorthand, allowing brands to capture specific aesthetics and consumer desires. For example pastel colors are widely used for "soft and cute" products like skincare, loungewear, or even baby items. Soft pinks, mint greens, and lavender create a calming, approachable, and gentle brand persona. Major color authorities like the Pantone Color Institute dictate yearly trends. Brands quickly adopt these forecasted colors in fashion, tech, and home goods to signal that they are modern and stylish. Brands selling high-end or sustainable products often use earthy minimalist neutral colors like beige, terracotta, sage to communicate transparency, premium quality, and eco-friendliness or even during the monsoon.

Chapter 5: How Color Shapes Children's Response to Advertisements

5.1 Color as a Silent Message in Advertising

Color acts as a silent language, especially in children's advertising, bypassing text to instantly shape brand associations and emotional responses. Advertisers strategically use specific palettes to trigger instant psychological reactions, dictating whether a child perceives a product as exciting, magical, safe, or healthy before reading any details. The Key Color Palettes Their Psychological Triggers are as follows.

Color Palette	Target Emotion	Common Product Categories
Primary Colors (Red, Yellow, Blue)	High energy, excitement, fun	Toys, cereals, fast-food
Warm & Sweet (Pink, Orange, Purple)	Magic, creativity, sweetness	Candy, sugary snacks, entertainment
Soft Pastels	Gentleness, safety, calm	Baby products, organic foods
Natural Greens & Earthy Tones	Health, wellness, eco-friendliness	"Healthy" snacks, eco-friendly toys

By leveraging these non-verbal cues, marketers connect directly with developmental responses. Bright hues demand immediate attention and signal playtime, while soft or natural tones reassure parents and communicate health or safety.

5.2 Color as a Shortcut for Judgement

Colors serve as an instant, emotional shortcut for children, overriding rational evaluation to drive impulse choices. Marketers exploit this by using bright or contrasting visuals and the "Halo Effect", where vibrant colors subconsciously signal excitement to make products instantly appealing, capture attention, and trigger pester power before logical thinking occurs. Understanding how specific colors influence children allows for better navigation of marketing tactics. Marketers strategically deploy specific hues to manipulate choices. The Mechanisms of Visual Influence include three major factors. Firstly, The "Halo Effect" where bright, vivid packaging creates a subconscious association with fun and excitement, making colorful products seem superior, tastier, or healthier than plain ones. Secondly, Visual Dominance where Children rely heavily on sight, making quick, instinctive judgments based entirely on packaging rather

than evaluating nutritional value or actual quality. Thirdly, Impulse Triggers where Visual design in supermarkets and digital ads targets children's immediate desires, capturing attention and driving peer power before logical thinking can occur. Understanding these techniques empowers parents and educators to decode marketing tactics and help children develop media literacy.

5.3 Color and Social Belonging Among Children

Color shapes children's responses to advertisements by triggering deep psychological drives [apa.org] for identity, connection, and safety. Marketers intentionally manipulate visual palettes to bypass logical thinking and speak directly to a child's developmental needs. Firstly they use Peer Alignment where Trend Signaling comes in. This is where saturated neon greens and electric blues quickly communicate that a product is current and cool. And conformity Impulse is where owning these specific colors reduces fear of isolation by matching what peers admire. Secondly, Media Association is used with Chromic Shortcuts like Primary red and blue combinations. They instantly trigger memories of beloved superhero characters. And Borrowed Trust where using a famous cartoon's exact color palette transfers existing character love to the product.

Thirdly, they use Group Belonging where Identity Marketing comes in. This is when vibrant, high-contrast palettes signify a world built exclusively for kids rather than adults. And Lifestyle Anchoring, which are tailored visual cues make children feel the item represents their unique social circle.

5.4 Color in Trending Brand Collaborations

Trending brand collaborations often use color to make products look new, exciting, and socially relevant. When brands collaborate with cartoons, movies, celebrities, gaming platforms, influencers, or other popular brands, they often introduce special color themes to attract children. Pop culture icons rely on highly specific, standardized color palettes. When a brand collaborates with a media property, they do not just print the character's face on the box; they absorb the character's exact visual identity. The Visual Shortcut is where children recognize color configurations faster than text or complex logos. Seeing a specific pairing of primary colors instantly triggers an association with a favorite superhero or cartoon character. Emotional Transference are The positive feelings, excitement, and trust a child associates with a character are instantly transferred to the physical product via these shared color cues.

Collaborative packaging uses advanced printing techniques to elevate the product's tactile and visual appeal. This transforms the unboxing process into a high-value cultural event. Textured or Matte finishes paired with high-gloss metallic accents make character-themed elements pop under retail lighting. Character silhouettes or iconic patterns are seamlessly woven into the product's structural design, ensuring the item feels integrated rather than cheaply branded.

By shifting a product from a standard item to a limited-edition color variant, brands trigger a collector's mindset. Firstly The Illusion of Scarcity where Standard product colors imply mass availability. Limited-edition palettes signal that the item is a rare piece of cultural history that will soon disappear. Secondly Peer-Group Validation where owning a product in a trending, collaborative colorway acts as a form of social currency among children and adolescents, signaling that they are aligned with what is currently popular.

For example, a standard gray or black video game console is transformed into a highly coveted collectible when re-released in a sleek crimson and gold palette themed around a popular superhero movie. Or when Sneaker brands frequently collaborate with animated series, using bright neon color blocks on classic shoe models to make standard designs feel modern, playful, and exclusive.

Chapter 6: Discussion, Ethical Concerns, and Conclusion

How does the use of color in advertising influence children's attention, emotional response, and product preferences?

6.1 Main Findings of the Review

Firstly, bright and highly saturated colors such as red, yellow, blue, and orange are particularly effective at capturing children's attention. Due to their developing cognitive abilities, children respond more strongly to visually stimulating advertisements than to written information. As a result, colorful packaging, advertisements, and digital content are often the first elements that attract a child's interest.

Secondly, colors significantly influence children's emotions. Different colors create different psychological responses; for example, warm colors such as red and yellow generate excitement, energy, and happiness, while softer colors can create feelings of safety, calmness, and trust. Advertisers strategically use these emotional associations to make products appear more appealing and desirable.

In this review we also found that packaging colors strongly affect how children perceive products. Children often associate certain colors with specific tastes, qualities, or experiences. Bright colors may make snacks appear sweeter and more enjoyable, while green and earthy tones may suggest that a product is healthy or natural. Similarly, colorful toy packaging can make products appear more fun and exciting regardless of their actual features.

Another important finding is that color plays a massive role in brand recognition and memory. Children frequently remember products and brands through their distinctive color schemes long before they can read brand names. Consistent use of color helps create strong associations between a brand and positive emotions, encouraging familiarity and loyalty over time.

Finally, the review highlights the growing influence of color in digital advertising. Websites, mobile applications, online games, and social media platforms use bright colors, contrasting buttons, and visually striking designs to guide attention and encourage engagement. These techniques often influence children's clicking behavior, product choices, and purchasing preferences.

6.2 Ethical Concerns in Advertising to Children

Discuss whether it is fair to use colors to influence children, especially when they may not understand advertising strategies. This section can include the idea of manipulation in marketing.

The Psychology of Color Manipulation is when Marketers often use specific color palettes to trigger subconscious emotional and behavioral responses, effectively bypassing rational decision-making like using Playful and Soothing Colors like Soft greens and blues are used to evoke feelings of nature, calmness, or trust, frequently utilized in educational or health-centric campaigns. When applied to advertising, the intentional use of these colors shifts from basic aesthetic appeal to marketing manipulation. For instance, children react to visual and auditory stimuli more directly than adults. Using color to trigger an automatic "want" or impulse exploits a child's natural curiosity and inability to evaluate the sales pitch. Or using Colorful, cartoonish packaging makes ads feel like entertainment rather than a sales strategy. This makes it difficult for a child to understand that the primary motive of the content is commercial, almost like blurring the line of difference.

The ethical consensus is that persuasive strategies targeting children require clear boundaries. Critics argue it is fundamentally unfair to employ sophisticated psychological techniques, like color psychology against an audience that lacks the psychological maturity to defend against them. Without proper media literacy or strict advertising regulations, the use of these strategies is often viewed as a direct violation of children's consumer rights.

6.3 Responsible Use of Color in Advertising

Suggest that advertisers should use colors creatively but responsibly. They should avoid misleading children, making unhealthy products look too attractive, or pressuring children through design. The responsibility associated with the application of colors in advertising is balancing between the elements of persuading the consumers and protecting them from any manipulations and tricks. Colors used in advertising have to correlate with ethical values and eliminate the use of deceptive approaches. To develop responsible and creative color strategies in advertising, advertisers have to adhere to the following best practices. First, Avoid Exploiting Color Strategies: Avoid the use of color combinations and aggressive colors like aggressive red or pulsating yellow to trick children and vulnerable segments of the audience into irrational purchases. Second, Avoid Deceptive Presentations: Avoid the use of colors for misleading presentations of products as healthier and superior to other products (e.g., using dark green colors for advertisement of highly processed food products).

Regulatory and Ethical Frameworks

India has very stringent guidelines on advertisements targeted at children in Chapter III of the ASCI Code. These laws state that no advertisement shall use the credulity, fidelity, or vulnerability of children. Advertisement material that uses color, sound, or animation to cause any kind of physical, mental, or moral injury is heavily regulated. Interested advertisers can refer to the ASCI Advertising Laws & Ethical Standards Code for full self-regulation codes.

6.4 Conclusion

Color is an essential element of any advertisement as it helps customers to perceive the product and makes them react to it in certain ways. From the analysis conducted during this review, one can see that color impacts attention, emotions, brand identification, and purchase decisions. Marketers choose various colors in order to communicate their messages and make their products appealing for the customers. The impact of colors is especially evident in children. Due to their development level, children are naturally attracted to colorful ads. Color can affect their emotions, impact product preference, and brand identification. Traditional and digital advertising utilizes color to manipulate children's decisions without letting them realize that.

In today's fast-moving world, advertisers have to be cautious about their use of colors as they are making their way into the digital world. Advertisers must use colors responsibly and ethically to ensure that their marketing does not take advantage of the weakness of children in any form. The influence of color on consumer behavior is something parents and teachers must understand. In conclusion, color is much more than just decoration in advertisements. It is a powerful form of visual communication that influences attention, emotion, memory, and consumer behavior. By having knowledge of this influence, society can promote advertising that is creative and efficient while being ethical as well.

6.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Further research may focus on the impact that colors have on the behavior of children exposed to digital marketing through the newest types of digital media, including advertisements on social media, mobile games, YouTube, food delivery apps, and shopping websites. The increase in children's exposure to the internet means that their reactions to colors used in digital marketing may be better understood.

Studies may also consider cross-cultural differences in children's perception of colors. Since colors may represent different things in different cultures, further comparison of these differences may give information on how cultural background affects children's emotions and attention to certain products.

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