



Color in Fashion Design: Orange That Changed
Our Perception of Luxury - the Use of Color at
Hermès Paris.

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Abstract

Color is an important aspect of fashion design. Every well-known brand relates to this topic with great prudence and seriousness. Color use accompanies designer starting with choosing palette for the logo till the creation of the final product. For the analysis the author chose one of the world's best-known fashion brands Hermès Paris. Current paper is divided in a couple of sections. The first section is devoted to the use of color as a universal language for brand communication and recognition through analysis of Hermès Paris. By studying this phenomenon alternative methods of influence on customer's behaviour from the marketing point of view were discovered.

The second section is based on studies made while working at Ratti, world known silk manufacturer. While executing research and development of the textile, not only the color has been taken into consideration but also such aspects as material and finishing that encompass the product design. The formerly conducted study intends to be a future handbook for designers of various disciplines and marketers due to its high applicability.

Keywords: *color, textile, fashion, marketing, brand communication*

INTRODUCTION

The history of fashion is directly linked to the development of color. The two aspects go hand in hand since centuries while mirroring the socio-cultural changes that occur through the history of a human being. Today there is no secret that in ancient times it was possible to identify a person not only according to the style of the dress, but also due to the specific hue the garment was made of. Thus only members of a certain social stratum were allowed to be dressed in color, whereas commoners were dressed in plain clothes. (Eiseman L. et al 2014).

As an example, the ancient Roman story unfolds that the Tyrian purple was so expensive to be produced that a dress made in this specific hue cost loosely its weight in gold, and moreover it was permitted to be used only for Caesar. Anyone else making an attempt to present himself in clothes of this color could face death (Cage p. 25). That is how we start to understand that since the ancient times the necessity of color was aimed not only to give pleasure to the human's eyes and to satisfy personal tastes, but it was strictly involved in the development of the society at the particular moment and had even political connotation.

Often it is discussed why people wear what they wear, and in fact it is directly rooted in the social environment and even if today there is no such limits in color use, that is widely influenced by the fact of the technical revolution and the manufacturing advancement all over the world, still we can often question ourselves why people choose one color over the other notwithstanding the difference in the hue can be considered as relatively minor. Any type of activity related to aesthetics and high involvement of personal taste, as for product design or choosing the new hue of the wall paint for a house, is usually highly affected by the preferences and the influence by individual perception of the color, that can be rooted in cultural background and the psychological influence on a specific person.

A particular power of color was noted even by Goethe (Goethe J.W. 1971), though real attention to this topic started to be noted only at the mid of the XX-th century. Fast and important changes in the development of architectural styles, as Bauhaus in Germany, rapid textile development in USSR at the beginning of the 20-th century, capitalistic economic model in the USA, all of these influenced to establish color as an international medium of communication.

In this paper, the author has decided to concentrate on the interrelation between color and fashion industry. In particular, a couple of distinct brands are going to be considered during the analysis. The author will study how color can interrelate with the brand development and market positioning, and later the complexity of the color use in textile manufacturing is going to be described.

There are a couple of examples in the fashion history that prove a significant role of color in the brand development and recognition. Speaking about the world of luxury goods it is impossible not to mention French brand Hermès Paris. Impeccable style and effortless opulence in every detail are not everything what we associate it with, it is also vivid orange packaging box and marigold Kelly bag (Eiseman 2014). Thus orange has not always been part of its identity, today Hermès Orange is more than just a logo color. It has become a part of the logo and incorporated in brand's perception among the public.

The Hermès' history counts more than 150 years, from 1837 when harness maker Thierry Hermès opened his first workshop in Paris. Over the time, a range of products they were offering expanded and in the mids of the 20-th century the fashion accessories have been added in their portfolio. Initially the packs of Hermès were of light beige color and as the history unfolds, the development of the color was linked directly to the chronicle of Paris and the Europe.

During the World War II Paris and Europe in general were facing tremendous shortage of food, goods and all the essential products. That is how once run out of the packing stock, Emile-Maurice Hermès had no other choice but to take the boxes of the color no one else wanted. Left with no option, he decided to sell goods in orange packages adding brown ribbon on the top of each box. That was the beginning of the birth of Hermès' corporate color due to the social conditions.



Figure 1. The history of the most iconic color of luxury: How the orange nuance was chosen as the symbol of Hermès

COLOR PSYCHOLOGY AND BRAND DEVELOPMENT

The brand color palette for Hermès is said to be chosen accidentally and probably the pure chance can attribute to the brand's success in a way. There can be various means the brand is manipulating the consumer's taste and behaviour, though it is worth remembering that a human being is highly responsive to the external stimulus that activate psychological and physiological responses.

As the brand is usually associated with reverberant orange, it has the vibrancy and can be seen as an energetic shot that brings joy and positivity. Being an offspring of the red hue, it still has more subtle and delicate nuance and is less aggressive. Proximity to red and yellow defines its dynamism of red and juicy radiance of yellow.

Orange is unarguably the most sociable hue - it immediately attracts attention, drives the wish for communication and enhances curiosity. Having the red's warm and reach undertones, orange has a capacity to win easily over the people in a friendly manner. It falls into the category of high-arousal color that trigger socialisation and appetite. On the physical level it foster spontaneity and creativity Eiseman (2017: 90).

The addition of the brown ribbon to the packaging played some additional role in the brand perception. Initially brown couldn't boast of the reputation of a luxurious color but with the time it has gained different connotation. Today rich brown hue is associated with refinement, coziness and delight. It is hue of delicious deep coffee smell, taste of Swiss chocolate, cashmere polo and horseback riding. So basically the synonym of tradition, elegance and impeccable style. Coming from the same color family, both Orange and Brown compose a perfect duo that bring feelings of tradition, hospitality and optimism.

The 20-th century was contrapuntal not only in terms of global changes of political paradigms but also in establishment of new type of relations between manufacturer and the customer. Constructing big mills and start of massive production of goods has brought to the stage the problem of competition on the market. In the free market economy every manufacturer started to be concerned not only about the quality of goods produced but also of the need to stand out from the crowd. That was the beginning of the era of global marketing initiatives.

Literally speaking the XX-th century officially sets the trend for an ideal package. Faber Birren, a real pioneer and one of the first professional practitioners of the color consultancy, had cited in his book "Selling with color" (Birren F. 1945: 104) a report made by a baker, pointing that the biggest amount of goods are sold in orange or red-orange shades, whereas the most satisfactory colors are warm hues as orange, red, brown, and light blue. His extensive research and analysis of experiments with customer's response to the changes in packaging colors prove that the prevalence of warm shades win attention and preference among the public.

It is worth mentioning that these results are the outcomes of the color perception by the human beings and directly rooted in neurophysiology. The approach to color use is nothing less than a methodic scientific approach to the topic. The personal viewpoint here doesn't play a significant role rather than methodical utilisation of this phenomena of the visual perceptivity.

Red is a color of high perception and preference, so its' derivatives are supposed to possess same or similar qualities depending on the inferior tones of a particular hue. The right balance of red undertones both in the box's orange and the ribbon's brown are probably the key motives for the brand's success from the visual point of view, as Faber Birren mentioned "The first duty of the package is to command the eye. Here color is perhaps vital." Once it is proved to be eye-catching, the package has to sustain in identity creation. The package should be visually pleasant and also be stimulative for positive emotions.

In case of Hermès there is a strong link to the quality of product and clients services, attention to the details and the heritage of the brand. As once Patrick Thomas, president of Hermes

until 2014 said: "Not long ago a woman came to us with a saddle, complaining that it had to be sewed up. We checked our archives where we keep track of everything including product repairs and we found out that the saddle was a gift from her grandmother, bought in 1937. Of course we have repaired it." So that is how the visual image of the brand and the quality of services it provides fused in one, create a strong identity in the consumer's mind. It is about recalling memories that imply tangible aspects, as the quality of materials used for the production, but also a set of intangible aspects that reside in one's mind.

COLOR, TEXTILE AND FASHION

Focusing deeper on the topic of fashion, the author has made a research of the color use in textile production. Following the Master course in the "Color design and technology" there was executed a practical approach to the color utilisation in the fashion industry. While working at Ratti one of the most important in Italy textile production mill, the color use was observed in pattern and textile production.

The author's aim was to observe in detail the whole textile creation process, train color consulting skills and to analyze the problems of color use in textile industry with successive proposals of a problem solving strategy.

For this specific work, the author immersed in trend forecasting both for color, pattern and textile. As every marque has its own identity, it was necessary to approach with prudence and attention the color palette proposals for the pattern, inform about the creative path of the brand in the past decades and only then start working on the projects.

During this experience the main obstacles that were found were as following:

1. Textile designer is not only suggesting the textile and pattern proposals, it is a highly analytical person who very often creates the collection without working directly at the brand. Segment of the luxury brands demands good understanding of the mood of the brand, its style and opportunities in which direction it could develop. In order to be successful in this work, it is necessary to know the history of the brand, keep in mind current fashion, social and even political trends. Working with color demands high attention to the details, as the slightest discrepancy of the lightness or saturation that does not go along with the brands's vision will devalue the whole work previously executed.

2. Once again on a personal example, it was proved that the way one perceives color will never be the same the other does. Active training in color matching was a starting point in order to affirm this. As in many cases brands were sending the color palettes mixing together pieces of textiles, leather, and coloured pieces of paper in order to complete the palette. Usually brand was giving direction for the textile basis the print would have to be made on, like silk, cotton or any other. Due to the fact Ratti is specialised in silk production, most of the cases it was necessary to execute color match from paper to the silk color "pantone" (corporate jargon that refers to the colors printed on textile and possessing a numerical ordinance for the printing). While paper color is lacking any lucidity in most of the case, the "right" color hue on the textile swatch was difficult to find because the perception of color on silk was changing attributive to the light source, matt or sheen structure of the textile. The more brilliant textile was always bringing sense of confusion. It was changing not only during the day time, but also after changing the focus point at the material for a couple of centimetres.

3. The textile basis, like silk, lycra, polyester all possess different characteristics, so specific method of the print has to be found. There are predefined printing procedures by the reason of different material. The behaviour of the color changes due to the textile composition. As, for example, printing on viscose was very often lacking brightness and it had tendency to shift versus darker, even dirty hues sometimes.

4. In many cases brands were developing the same print but on different base. Like the same print could be intended to be done both on silk and polyester. So for both of those textiles colors had to be checked before starting printing trials. Very often the hues possessing the same number on the textile color swatch could have completely different tonality or even minor hues.

4. Complex patterns had to be "projected" keeping in mind how the colors are going to work in tandem. Specialising in silk accessories, it was essential to create right pattern and realise it in a right color palette. Color mixed with the right design is a winning strategy for creating a desirable product. Once the those two principles marry together, the success is granted to the item.

CONCLUSION

Coming to a conclusion, it is worth saying that color is a powerful medium of non-verbal communication that conveys information better than verbal means. Color language is a unique and universal tool that is transversal and spreads influence far beyond one culture. In this work the author aimed to combine both practical approach to the color use in fashion by analysing the personal experience of working in the color consulting field, and by interpreting the color use in the brand strategy and communication. The findings mentioned below would be useful for everyone who is interested in color communication, marketing and color use in fashion are.

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