



ПЛАТФОРМА 3 ІНФОРМАЦІЙНІ ТЕХНОЛОГІЇ ВІЗУАЛІЗАЦІЇ У ДИЗАЙНІ

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PACKAGING FOR CHOCOLATE BARS - THE INFLUENCE OF COLOR ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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The paper discusses the role of color in chocolate package design, analyzing how color influences consumer attitudes and purchase behavior. Through a focus on Moldova, the study reveals how color arouses feelings, shapes perceptions of quality, and supports brand identity in the chocolates industry. This research delves into the psychological impact of colors in chocolate packaging. It examines how certain colors influence customers' perceptions, the role that color plays within marketing strategies, and the unique preferences of consumers in the Republic of Moldova.

Key words: *chocolate packaging, colors, visual communication, auditory perception, color perception.*

INTRODUCTION

Color is not only an essential factor in packaging for various products, color is the first reason why the consumer will decide to buy the given product, or choose another one from the same shelf. The aesthetic quality of a product plays a critical role in drawing consumer attention and driving purchasing decisions. Amidst the numerous design features, color emerges as a highly effective instrument, with the ability to evoke emotions, form associations, and mold consumer expectations. In package design, color not only makes a product more noticeable but also conveys critical information regarding its quality, positioning, and brand identity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Colour contributes a great deal to the formulation of consumer attitudes and the buying decision. Research has shown that individuals make a decision about a product within 90 seconds, where the decision is roughly 90% based on colour [1]. Color is quicker to be processed than text content or shape by the human brain and hence becomes an important element in packaging design.

The psychological effects of color operate through various independent mechanisms. Firstly, the colors elicit particular emotional reactions that are then linked to the product's packaging. Labrecque and Milne [2] attest that the emotional reactions can have a strong influence on customer perception of the product qualities, regardless of whether the actual product itself is altered. Their study



discovered that a change in package color alone is enough to modify customer expectations regarding taste, performance, and general quality.

Colour is also an effective attention mechanism. In visually cluttered consumer product environments, the strategic use of colour can strongly enhance the prospect of a product being visually selected by consumers. Kauppinen-Räsänen and Luomala [3] state that the use of unusual or contrasting colours among product categories causes what they call "visual saliency", which effectively directs consumer attention within competitive shelf displays. The research indicated that brands using unique color schemes in their category attracted up to 40% more visual attention in eye-tracking studies. In addition to influencing attention and emotion, color also conveys vital information regarding product positioning and attributes. A study by Grossman and Wisenblit established that consumers develop learned color-product category associations, which generate strong expectations. These associations become so ingrained that their violation can establish formidable market barriers. For example, the findings of their study revealed that consumers reliably rejected yellow packaging for dairy products, despite the identical contents, thereby demonstrating the power of color-based expectations.

The psychological potency of color extends to perceptions of volume and weight. Fascinatingly, packages with lighter colors appear larger to consumers than identical packages in darker colors, while darker packages are perceived as containing more product by weight. This insight allows manufacturers to strategically manipulate packaging color to enhance value perceptions without altering actual product quantities. Moreover, recent neuroimaging research has demonstrated that color processing engages brain regions linked to memory, emotion, and decision-making. Zaltman utilized fMRI technology to investigate how specific colors of product packaging created measurable alterations in brain activity corresponding to purchasing intention. Therefore, appropriate color selections are able to form neurological inclinations toward product choices prior to conscious deliberation.

Packaging is a key element in drawing the consumer's attention and shaping buying decisions, particularly in the chocolate market, where appearance goes hand in hand with taste. Central to packaging design is the color scheme, which has an immediate effect on product perception. Colors elicit an emotional response, they form associations and convey brand identity, and hence are an effective marketing tool.

A survey conducted by researchers at Kannur University in India found that 94% of respondents admitted that good advertising, if combined with attractive packaging, can significantly boost sales. In addition, 72% of people who purchased a newly launched chocolate admitted that the packaging caught their eye, but 61% later regretted their purchase [2]. This highlights the power of visual presentation in shaping consumer expectations and purchase decisions.

A few chocolate manufacturers keep a consistent and unique color scheme throughout their whole product line in order to promote maximum brand recognition and customer loyalty. Milka, for instance, is heavily identified with its purple color, and Lindt frequently employs gold to suggest luxury and high quality. Conversely, other brands rely on diverse color schemes in line with differences in flavors, where each particular taste has its own individual color—e.g., green for mint, orange for caramel, and red for dark chocolate and berries. These strategies enable customers



to identify their preferred flavors instantly, thereby enhancing the overall shopping experience.

Prior to specifically addressing what color scheme is employed in chocolate packaging, it is utterly imperative to first learn about the overall impact of colors on human perception. Each color possesses a distinctive effect on individuals, inducing varied feelings as well as psychological states. Researchers Kuthe and Venn have demonstrated that, at physiological, physical, and metaphysical levels, colors have the following interpretations:

Table 1. The psychological, physical, and metaphysical impact of colors [3-4]

Color	Psychological level	Physical level	Metaphysical level	Associated with:
Blue	Cool, refreshing, moist	Distance, tranquility, infinity	Sympathy, sadness, harmony, friendship	Sadness
Red	Hot, warm, dry	Dynamism, activism, danger, power	Optimism, desire, sexuality, exoticism, fantasy	Optimism
Green	Spicy, fresh, sour, bitter	Naturalness, vitality, calm	Hope, relaxation, safety, patience,	Naturalness
Yellow	Bright, sour, toxic, bitter	Summer, abundance	Insincerity, jealousy, envy, greed	Envy
White	Salty, delicate, pure, refined	Perfection, innocence, functionality	Eternity, beginning, piety, faith, sincerity, punctuality	Sincerity
Black	Stingy, edgy, harsh	End, emptiness, elegance	Magic, sadness, selfishness, guilt, oppression, power	Power
Violet	Extravagant	Originality, hypocrisy	Piety, redemption, faith, fantasy	Weakness
Brown	Acromatic, creaky	Non-eroticism, comfort	Laziness, indulgence, philistinism, modesty	Small-bourgeois mentality
Gray	Neutral	Old age, comfort, conformity	Dreaming, punctuality, insensitivity	Modesty

The analysis of market trends indicates that color significantly impacts consumers' perceptions regarding chocolate packaging, thereby subtly shaping their expectations and preferences. The color brown, frequently linked to the rich and profound flavor profile of chocolate, communicates a sense of luxury and authenticity, invoking a traditional and enduring aesthetic. Conversely, the color gold denotes premium quality and exclusivity, implying that the chocolate



represents a high-end offering. Green is commonly used to express natural ingredients, eco-friendliness, and health awareness and thus is most appropriate for fair-trade or organic chocolates. Red, associated with passion and indulgence, creates a sense of desire and temptation, perfectly suited for limited editions or decadent varieties.

Other colors, like purple, which signifies royalty, express high quality and selectiveness, thereby further boosting its demand for premium artisanal chocolates. Although blue is comparatively rarer, it connotes a sense of trustworthiness and dependability, which is advantageous for brands seeking to cultivate enduring customer loyalty. Conversely, yellow elicits emotions of joy and warmth, promoting a positive and carefree atmosphere. The deliberate integration of these hues not only improves visual attractiveness but also conveys particular messages that resonate with consumer sentiments, thereby augmenting the comprehensive experience of both purchasing and savoring chocolate.

Following the organization of a public opinion survey in Moldova, organized by us, using the Google Forms platform (<https://forms.gle/e7wjxf8uPP9ZuCo28>; <https://forms.gle/RGraV5hxfw3RRyiNA>), we aimed to investigate consumer attitudes to the color of chocolate packaging, identifying strong associations between color, perceived quality, and purchasing behavior. Participants, who were predominantly in the 18-24 years old age group and are urban-based, favored traditional premium colors, with gold (64.5%), black (48.4%), and white (45.2%) being most highly rated. Gold was regarded as the most suitable color for luxury chocolate (58.1%). Both surveys showed that 74.2% considered packaging color to be one of the main purchasing decision factors, and 77.4% attested that it had an influence on perceived product quality. Emotional associations linked colors to attributes like sophistication (48.4%) and glamour (41.9%). The surveys point to the importance of color in shaping consumer perception and brand positioning.

CONCLUSIONS

The research articulated in this article confirms the profound impact color has on consumer attitudes and buying behavior. The emotional and psychological associations with various colors can define the image of a product, the expectations of quality and taste, and the product's overall attractiveness on the retail shelf. The use of color in packaging is an important factor in marketing and branding initiatives.

We can observe that in packaging chocolate, brown, gold, and red have been the colors highlighted to encourage indulgence, luxury, and authenticity by the firm. Also, as suggests consumer of the Republic of Moldova behavior, it directly relates to the value placed on packaging color because it shows greater desirability by employing high-end colors.

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