

The Psychology of Food and Colors

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Introduction

‘We eat with our eyes’ we have heard this phrase many time, and we have often heard that one must eat a colorful plate. So what does this all means? It’s not just about getting different nutrition but the color of our food also play a strong role in the selection of our food. According to the color psychology of food our brain tends to react different to different colors just like if we talk about the color red, what comes to your mind? Red color signifies love, passion, strength as it is considered to be a very powerful color on the other hand what does the color green pokes up? Green color is for nature, safety, health etc. Not only does it go with its impressions but certain color foods also gives our brain the signal of how it tastes making it a unit sensory evaluation. In this way every color has its own psychology and value. However, if the color not matches the taste, then the result may well be a negative valence disconfirmation of expectation. Food colors can have rather different meanings and gives rise to varied expectations, in different age groups. Genetic differences, such as in a person’s sensory status, can also temper the psychological impact of food color on flavor perception. In this article we will study the psychology of different colors of food and how this color psychology is used as business or marketing strategy.

“Colour is the single most important product-intrinsic sensory cue when it comes to setting people’s expectations regarding the likely taste and flavour of food and drink.”

Charles Spence

Color is then an integral part of the sensory information that antecedes psychology itself. It is often the first thing we notice in the appearance of a food product. Many studies suggest that visual taste perception begins in infancy and increases as we age. Now that we consider the meaning of color within our food & drink product, let’s see what specific colors mean:

S. No.	Color	Mood & Quality
1	RED	One of the chief food colors. Evokes the taste buds and stimulates the appetite.
2	GREEN	Denotes eco friendliness and assure safety and health. Main color associated with being fresh, healthy, natural, organic or vegetarian, and is now a symbol of health and well-being.
3	YELLOW	Fastest color to be processed by the human brain. Appetite stimulant. Transmits a sense of positivity and happiness.
4	ORANGE	Blend of red and yellow. Naturally appetizing color.
5	BLUE	Associated with freshness and cleanliness, cold as well, so great if you're promoting a chilled product. Evoke a sense of serenity and relaxation. Not commonly found in nature, can be unappetizing.
6	BLACK	Traditionally associated with bitter flavors and less appetizing.
7	BROWN	Warm, appetizing, wholesome, sustainable, natural. Being used more frequently in natural food products.
8	WHITE	Connotes freshness, pureness, innovation, cleanliness, and sophistication and on the other hand stark, plain and sterile.
9	PURPLE	Associated with elitism, lavish, luxury and indulgence Similar to blue but more common in nature.

However this color psychology in terms of food is not only limited to the food we see and eat daily but all the food manufactures use this in their marketing strategies as well either be it a brand logo or packaging.

Psychology of Food Packaging and Colors

Our visual factors influence more than 90% of purchase decisions, and 85% of shoppers say that color is the primary reason for buying a product. With that in mind, food manufactures tends to use color in order to make it more purchasable. The above mentioned table represents how consumers react to them while packaging colors of those food items are

entirely different feelings. For example, seeing yellow noodles on a plate vs. purchasing them in red packaging can evoke different emotions.

The following table represents how color psychology is use in food packaging:

S. No.	Color	Impression
1	RED	Bold packaging choice, helps draw attention towards product, sparks appetite, high wavelength makes people notice it first, which is why so much food packaging features red.
2	BLUE	Trust and dependability. However, darker blues are more serious and formal, whereas lighter blues help give the perception of softness and creativity.
3	YELLOW	Original or innovative or that the product is less expensive or fun. With the happy energy of this color, it has a youthful, vibe full and attract a younger demographic.
4	ORANGE	Value and affordability, and for food marketers, using orange on packaging helps give an item a more affordable quality.
5	GREEN	Healthy and organic products.
6	PURPLE	Unique or original, associated with spirituality and is a common choice for holistic products.
7	BLACK	Luxury, appearing more substantial and expensive, which transmits a higher perceived value. Used in high end premium packaging of food products
8	BROWN	Promotes natural, wholesome, or organic sustainability, and earthy feel. Usually claims recycled packaging.
9	WHITE	Cleanliness, purity, efficiency or simplicity. Mostly creates an impression regarding dairy products.

Psychology of Food Brands Logo and Colors

Ever wondered why most of the food brands chain mostly choose the color red and yellow as their brand logo? There is a huge psychology behind this. *According to reports, customers make 60% of their decisions based on color of the product alone and there are multiple reasons for using different colors.* If we think about the advertising holders, panels



and logos of brands like McDonald's, Burger King, KFC, Wendy's, Pizza Hut etc. Do we find anything common among these brands? One major similarity is the color that they use. The science behind using these colors is called *ketchup and mustard theory*. It is believed by scientists that both red and yellow colors have the ability to encourage the consumers to eat by putting visual impressions as colors are the fastest mode of communication for our brain. On one hand where yellow symbolizes happiness, excitement, and cheer whereas on the other hand red symbolizes attention seeking causing triggers of appetite and hunger. Where red makes us feel warm, loved and comfortable yellow grabs our attention in increasing the speed of our metabolism.

It is believed by the experts that the combination of these two colors creates a perfect combination of emotions and feelings to make people feel hungry and spend more time while having a meal.

Conclusion

The food we eat and the color associated with it have a huge impact in the selection of food items we eat in our day to day life. Different color tends to influence of mind differently and gives us a sense of taste and flavor and hence color stands as the most important sensory evaluation and this tendency of mind increases as we grow. These color psychology is often used by food brands in order to create attraction towards a certain product either through their packaging or by their brand logo. In either way the color red and yellow stands first in attracting people towards a certain product and also these are two most appetizing colors. So, this is what color psychology in terms of food is and how its implemented by marketing teams.