

6th World conference on Psychology Counseling and Guidance, 14 - 16 May 2015

## Colour preferences according to educational background

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### Abstract

This study investigated differences in colour preferences associated with academic field of study. This is because it is believed that educational background has an impact on personality traits affecting individual choices including colour preferences. A questionnaire was collected from 80 participants including students at graphic design and information technology departments at first and final years of study. Subjects were asked to choose the most preferred colour for clothing and living room. “Blue” was the most preferred colour for clothing by 15% of the total subjects. Colour preferences were not related to education concerning the clothing in all cases including students from first and final levels in graphic design and information technology departments. However, “White” was found the most preferred colour by 35% of total subjects. There were found significant relationships between educational background and colour preferences for living room. This relationship was investigated for final year students of graphic design and information technology  $\chi^2 = 21.7$ ;  $p=0.003$ ;  $\alpha=0.05$ , and for graphic design students from first and final years, the value of chi-square equals 14.5 which was significant at the 5% level  $p=0.02$ .

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Peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Research and Education Center.

**Keywords:** Colour ;Preference; education; personality; design.

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### 1. Introduction

Color along with line, shape, size and texture are the building blocks of art and design products. These have a great role in making an art and design product liked or disliked. However, color dominates other design elements that it is the strongest and fastest element concerned with delivering a message, attracts the attention, affects the emotion or markets a design. It would be used to communicate with audience and emphasize a meaning of an artwork. Moreover, a product's color plays an important role in a consumer's purchase decision (Priluck Grossman

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and Wisenblit, 1999). Therefore, marketing of art and design products is highly affected by consumers color preference.

Color creates instant subconscious judgment. It was found that people make up their minds within 90 seconds of their initial interactions with either people or products. About 62-90 percent of the assessment is based on colours alone (Singh, 2006). Therefore, it is vital for designers to understand consumers' preference of color as part of effective design plans. Consumer's response to color as well has a great impact on designer's selection of color scheme. Therefore, designer decision and choosing of colours should be based on targeted consumer preference of and response to color. Researchers suggested careful selection of colour product. Elliot *et al.* proposed that care must be taken in how red is used in achievement contexts and illustrated how color can act as a subtle environmental cue that has important influences on behaviour (Elliot and Maier, 2007).

The psychology of color preference has been long studied by researchers since late nineteenth century. The earliest documented research concerned with color preference was carried out by Jastrow in 1893 (Best, 2012). He asked 4556 participants to select their single favourite color from a set of 12 colours and then he rank ordered the colours according to the vote frequency for each color. Since then, a great deal of research studies concerned with color preference was carried out (Best, 2012). Differences in color preference according to gender, age, culture, personality and mood were studied and its dependency on topic was investigated. Some research studies were concerned with exploring the emotional meanings and effects of color examining emotional associations to colours. Eysenck in 1941 showed in his research (using ten Ostwald coloured papers as stimuli and employing female and male university students with equal number) the existence of a general order of preference for colours. Blue was the most preferred colour followed by red, green, violet, orange and yellow (Eysenck, 1941).

Gender difference is one of the most controversial variations in color preference studies. This is presented in two types of difference. These are the ranking of preferred colours (McManus *et al.*, 1981) and degree of preference (i.e. stability and reliability). It was found that females have stronger as well as greater stability (over short timescales) of preferences than males (Gelineau, 1981). Although, gender difference is interrelated with other factors such as age. Researchers found that gender differences are obvious in young ages and effectively reduce for elderly people compared with young subjects (Bonnardel *et al.*, 2006; Ling *et al.*, 2011, Dittmar, 2000). This maybe refers to poor color discrimination in old age (Sagawa and Takahashi, 2001). Ellis and Ficek indicated that males are significantly more likely than females to prefer variations on the color of blue (Ellis and Ficek, 2001).

Influence of development and ageing on color preference has become increasingly clear by researchers. Dorcus in 1926 compared five different main age groups and found that college age subjects had the most significant decision with regard to color preference rather than children (around 9 years old) and old people (around 60 years old). However, Ling and Hurlbert in 2011 found insignificant difference between age groups (8-9) years old, (11-12) years old, (18-22) years old and (61-88) years old in selecting preferred colours. Later they suggested that significant difference would be found due to long term changes. This was evident between female subjects their age range 11-12 years and 61-88 years (Ling *et al.*, 2011; Best, 2012). In a research investigating age-related differences in color preference of displays, significant differences between young and aged observers' color image preference were indicated. Some of which can be explained with neuro-physiological changes, others may be attributed to cultural implications (Beke *et al.*, 2008). Walton *et al.* accumulated results from experiments upon color preferences of males and females over a period of 14 years from 1910 to 1931 using the 18 Milton Bradley coloured papers as stimuli. They indicated that there were certain differences between the two sexes. Moreover, there were persistent differences in affective values for colours, in spite of fluctuations from year to year and in spite of sex differences. They indicated that color preferences are determined by social conditioning and environmental factors and deep underlying biological factors (Walton *et al.*, 1933).

Personality is the set of emotional qualities and ways of behaving distinguish each person. It plays an important role in person choices based on psychophysical responses such as color preference. Moreover, it affects the way an individual interpret the emotional value of color. So, every colour creates associations and has a personality

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