



Colour My Ads Heroic

In advertising colour is far more than just some gimmicky device for snagging the reader's attention. As a marketing sage and scientist, Louis Cheskin discovered in his study of the psychology of selling, colour in advertising establishes an emotional atmosphere of lightness, hardness, strength prestige, femininity and masculinity etc.

From my early days of schlepping ads, it was red that we would sell to contrast with other ads. It was the only other option we had since red was typically the only shade available beyond black. I learned to get very creative with my use of white space to contrast the black and it was the cheap alternative to spot colour. In today's world of print you have the complete spectrum to work with so let's look at what works best and why.

First a brief understanding and then some mindshare on what to use to make those ads pop.

The iris of the eye sees the long wave first, which is yellow then orange then red.

Now we get a subconscious feeling of annoyance from these colours but at the same time we're drawn and attracted to them. Go figure, kinda like a girlfriend I once had. Annoying yet attractive.

So now you know why No Frills chose yellow, and Home Depot, Ing Bank and Hooters are orange. The first colours we perceive in the spectrum. Nothing is left to chance.

Just for the record the most to least popular ad colours would be ranked as below: (beginning with most liked)

- Blue
- Red
- Green
- Purple
- Orange
- Yellow

Blue makes people think of water, sky, travel, air, ocean, freedom, dreams and youth.

Red is all about love, passion, sensuality and warmth. Caution though, it also conjures, bloodshed, Satan and revolution.

Green is calming (ah, institutional green), implies wellness, hope and the environment. (Watch out pseudo-organics, it could backfire.)

Purple is just a cool red. It is seldom a first choice for advertising unless a suggestion of royalty is desired. Certain very rich chocolate bars.

Orange tends to evoke a sense of frivolity. Maybe that's why it was the right choice for Hooters. (Home Depot?) It somehow speaks to the region of the male brain that responds to drywall, burgers and boobs. And finally submarines, bananas and taxis;

Yellow is considered happy, vibrant and friendly. (Hmmm why last place?) It also represents deals like No Frills or Wal-Mart's signage; And it pairs really well with black.

Oops, lets not forget white. Since many of your clients may not have the budget for colour.

White symbolizes perfection, trendiness, innocence, youth, calm and peace. It personifies clean and is the perfect match for any other colour. Think of it as your canvas. If it weren't so powerful why are we all obsessed with White Strips for gleaming white teeth?

When choosing colours keep in mind the emotion that each hue evokes in readers and use the one most appropriate for the occasion.

Get it right and you'll be the hero.

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