

The Role and Impact of Colour in Advertising and Packaging

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ABSTRACT

Colour apart from being a marketing tool or gimmick also helps in establishing an atmosphere and arouses various emotions in the minds of a customer. Ad experts have always claimed that a particular colour can make all the difference in advertisement exposure, product sales and the overall success and failure of a product. Colour works very much like images in creating an impact on the customer's mind where they forge psychological relationship between the colour of an ad, that of the product's packaging, and its content. The research paper will aim to understand the role of colour in advertising and also explore its effects when it comes to packaging of consumer products in general. The paper will give a balanced view on Indian and International perspectives of colour, its hidden meaning and important role in advertising. The research will also focus on the various perceptions that colour carries, as it creates a sense in the customer – this will focus on recently gathered primary data as well as what experts have published previously through secondary data.

Keywords: Colour, Marketing, Advertisement, Packaging, Role, Ad, India,

1. Introduction

1.1. Colours in Advertising

Back in the 1960s, all over the world people depended mainly on the radio, the printing press and the black and white television as a medium for advertising. The advertising world spins around the principle of attraction as whatever the product may be, in the end, the advertisement should attract the consumer. Colour over the years has become an essential need of print advertising and is used in stopping and luring readers, onlookers and shoppers by establishing a mood and perception, building a brand identity and providing realism.

Colour is often the last reason to buy a product, but it's the first thing a consumer sees. There is a memory and emotion factor involved, but in fact, a message printed in colour is remembered far longer than one printed in black and white. The science behind colours in advertising or packaging is an interesting topic to explore.

Humans register colour when light beams enter their eyes, the pigments then determine the different colours and lastly will send out a message to the brain. Thus, colours do affect how we feel and react to certain advertisements. Because we do not actively think of colours and the ideas they remind us of, the effect colours have on us is subliminal. For example, *we are conditioned universally to accept colours such as the stereotype blue for boy and pink for girl.*

Colour is a silent language that we all respond to based on whether it is a behavioral response or a learned response. Even the food we eat, the colour is taken into account by food industries and advertising companies when packaging and marketing their products. Drinks like *Mountain Dew which is a yellow carbonated colour drink in their recent ad campaign launched in September 2011 featured a neon-green bottle featuring actor Salman Khan consuming it as a cool and sporty drink.* Or the Apple iPod advertisements; *they use simple tri tone colour schemes of black, white and a bright background colour. The bright background colour is to give the advertisement a fun feel and the contrasting white on black is to focus attention.*

1.2 Colours in Packaging

“Packaging is the container for a product – encompassing the physical appearance of the container and including the design, colour, shape, labeling and materials used” (Arens,1996).

The Package becomes an ultimate selling proposition stimulating impulsive buying behavior, increasing market share and reducing promotional costs. There are usually six variables that must be taken into Consideration by producer and designers when creating efficient package: form, size, colour, graphics, material and flavor. Kotler (2006) writes that package could be treated as one of most valuable tool in

today's marketing communications, necessitating more detail analysis of its elements and an impact of those elements on consumers buying behavior.

Colours and shapes are important elements of marketing strategies, and they are both essential features of packages, especially in product labels. Labels are one of the most important features of product packaging, and they are designed to communicate a message. Furthermore researchers mention that colours affect graphic design on the package, though even this is changing with globalization. For example, black was once seen as an inauspicious colour and was generally avoided. Now, many see it as an ideal colour for premium packaging products in India.

According to an Anonymous writer in Marketing Whitebook (2009) the intensive customer research and feedback determine the kind of adaptations to be made to products -- the colour of refrigerators, for instance. *The generous use of oil and strong spices such as turmeric in Punjabi cooking can stain pastel-coloured appliances, which is why more intense shades in microwaves, containers and vessels do particularly well in that market.*

2. Objectives

One of the first things you notice about any advertisement is the colours. This research paper is exploring the impact and the role of colours in print based advertisements and packaging.

Hence, keeping the above in mind, the research objectives of this paper are:

- 1) To determine if consumers are attracted towards an advertisement because of the colour(s) used.**
- 2) To determine if consumers are attracted towards a package because of the colour(s).**
- 3) To understand the significance of colours used in media through secondary data**

3. Research Hypothesis

Keeping the objectives of the paper in mind, the research hypothesis will be of two types and will be as follows:

Set 1 - To examine the role of colour in print based media

H₀: Colour does not play an important role in print-based advertising.

H₁: Colour has an important role in print-based advertising.

Set 2 - To examine the role of colour in packaging

H₀: Colour does not play an important factor when it comes to the packaging of a product

H₁: Colour plays an important factor when it comes to the packaging of a product

4. Literature Review

As mentioned in the introduction, research on colours in the Indian context of advertising or packaging is not much but is gaining steady momentum. This section looks at the literature on role of colours in advertising and packaging from a historical and modern perspective.

Cheskin (1963) states in his book *Business without Gambling; How successful marketers use scientific methods* how it becomes essential to use colours to project an image of the product—is it a Novelty? Could it be a warm, family oriented-thing? Or is it a bright, colourful children thing? Or Is it a cool teenager trend? The book has various insights on scientific and practical use of colours and perception in human beings. Another journal published around 1963 was *Printer's Ink* which stated about memory retention through print colour ads. Whereas an article published a few years later by Wheatley *Measuring the effect of ROP (run of press) colour on Newspaper Advertising* showcased even more examples and expands on theories put forward later by Cheskin (1967) .

But the most significant and extensive research carried out on colours in print media for marketing has been carried out by Daniel Starch in 1966. His study of a sample of 23,000 ads pertaining to a variety of products showed that four colour ads achieved far more visibility, whatever their size, than those in black-and-white or in just two colours. A similar study conducted on more than 25,000 ads appearing in different American Publications achieved identical results. His theory has been supported by Austin & Sparkman (1980) as well as White (1997) who state that full-page colour ads, in short achieve 45% more

attention than full-page black and white ones. All things being equal, one colour boosts readership by 22% while more colours combined boosts it by 68%.

Authors such as Shah & D'Souza (2009) state that colour quality is best found nowadays in magazines which use a wide range of colours compared to newspapers followed by outdoor ads and posters. The quality of printing and paper used also make a big difference as colours can evoke emotional responses that creating lasting impressions. For example, The Colours of India campaign emphasized India's diverse cultural spectrum. Featuring breathtaking images and colour-based headlines such as Coffee Brown and Red Hot, the campaign was launched globally in 71 leading newspapers and magazines. India was positioned as a unique and vibrant destination for tourists using traditional and interactive media - print, outdoor and the internet -. This was the second campaign developed by Leena Nandan, Joint Secretary (Tourism) and V Sunil, Executive Creative Director, Wieden+Kennedy Delhi.

Furthermore, Embry (1984) and Johnson (1992) also suggest that Colour can improve readership by 40 percent, learning from 55 to 78 percent, and comprehension by 73 percent . They stated independently that ads in colour are read up to 42% more often than the same ads in black and white as shown in study on phone directory ads

On the other hand, Packages are found to attract attention (Underwood *et al.*, 2001; Garber *et al.*, 2000; Goldberg *et al.*, 1999; Vila, N. & Ampuero, O., 2007). Furthermore, pictures on packages with various or singular colours are emphasized to attract attention, particularly when consumers are not aware of the brands (Underwood, 2003).

Most research into packaging has found that different packaging indications impact how a product is perceived. The packaging is perceived to be part of the product and it can be difficult for consumers to separate the two (the concept of gestalt). Orth & Malkewitz (2009) worked on an interesting paper on Packaging Design as resource for the construction of Brand Identity. A thorough review of the literature on packaging design reveals that there are no meaningful guidelines for developing holistic packaging design, Shapes, Finishes, Sizes, Images, Typography, Colours, Impressions, Purchase Intention, and Brand.

In the US, the *Heinz EZ Squirt Blastin' Green ketchup* has had more than 10 million bottles sold in the first seven months following its introduction, with Heinz factories working 24 hours a day, seven days a week to keep up with demand. The result: \$23 million in sales attributable to Heinz green ketchup [highest sales increase in the Heinz brand's history]. The simple colour change of green and its unique

packaging, by introducing the upside-down' ketchup bottle required no shaking and instead only a gentle squeeze for ketchup to flow.

As per a KPMG analysis for India done earlier in 2010, the market size of the packaged food segment is estimated to be Rs. 310 billion. The urban population is consuming more ready-to-eat and ready to cook products, chips, salted snacks, chocolates, bakery products, biscuits, soft-drinks, etc. Hence, some interesting research results in relation to this were produced by Rex *et al* (2003), titled 'An Exploratory Study into the Impact of Colour and Packaging as Stimuli in the Decision Making Process for a Low Involvement Non-Durable Product'. While brand and price were of about equal importance, overall, the consumers indicated that the flavor of the product was easily the most important stimulus when selecting potato crisps by identifying with the colour of the packaging.

Various case studies around the world were mainly analysed and colour has been used by marketers to lure customers towards a particular ad or product or new packaging. For example, Alsop (1984) mentions the use of colour in most design for marketing and advertising is dictated by certain obvious requirements; the need to reflect a specific brand, as well as the attempt to communicate a certain mood dictated by the product itself. Dupont (2006) writes that Apple in 1997 brought colour into an IT marketplace where colour had not been seen before by introducing the colourful iMacs, and by 2006 with the colourful iPods. All of these various colours were meant to suit the customer's attitude and style statement.

A recent interesting case was to bring about environmental and ecological awareness in India, when the government of Delhi started green-coloured buses which made consumers and travelers more eco-friendly (Prabhakar, 2010). The article showed that consumers were so influenced by the green colour that they became more eco-friendly in their day-to-day actions and became aware about pollution and recycling activities.

5. Methodology

The secondary data has been collected from physical hard-copies of books, academic text, magazines and academic journals. Many books have not been quoted in the paper but served as a source of inspiration and have been mentioned in the bibliography. Many journals were available through online sources such as Proquest. A few journalistic websites have also been browsed and referred but blogs have been completely avoided as they do not have any academic validity.

Keeping in mind the research context of this paper, a quantitative research has been undertaken and the sample size has been limited to 50 respondents only. The primary data was acquired through a survey using selective random sampling method at a famous marketplace located within South Mumbai called - Crawford Market. A questionnaire was given out to each respondent on a first come first serve basis at different locations with the market. As long as the respondent was literate, they were handed out the questionnaire which was filled on-the-spot within 3-4 minutes. The questionnaire format was quickly briefed upon and assistance was provided where necessary.

The questionnaire consists of approximately 14 closed-ended questions without ranking so as to be specific. The questionnaire ends with another 3 questions dealing with personal data such as gender, age and marital status and names were kept as optional to the respondent. Only 1 open-ended question has been asked to highlight certain advertisements or products that have undergone a colour change or used certain colour(s) to emphasize a point. In order to reinforce certain points and make sure that bias does not occur, certain questions have been repeated with a slight difference - the objective being the significance of colour.

Once the data was collected, it was entered into Microsoft Excel and then it was exported to SPSS where the data was neatly organized by each variable. The analysis was done through SPSS and keeping in mind the objective of the paper – descriptive statistics have been used. Hence, cross-tabulations were done in order to measure similarities within questions to mask the role of colour and the data has been interpreted through graphs which will reflect in the findings.

6. Interpretation & Findings

6.1. Demographics

Since selective random sampling method was used it was easy to select 25 males and 25 females respectively.

Maximum no. of respondents was from the 25-49 age group followed by 50-60 age group and 60+. Only one teenager and a few individuals between ages of 19-35 were selected due to time constraints and availability. Refer graph for more details.

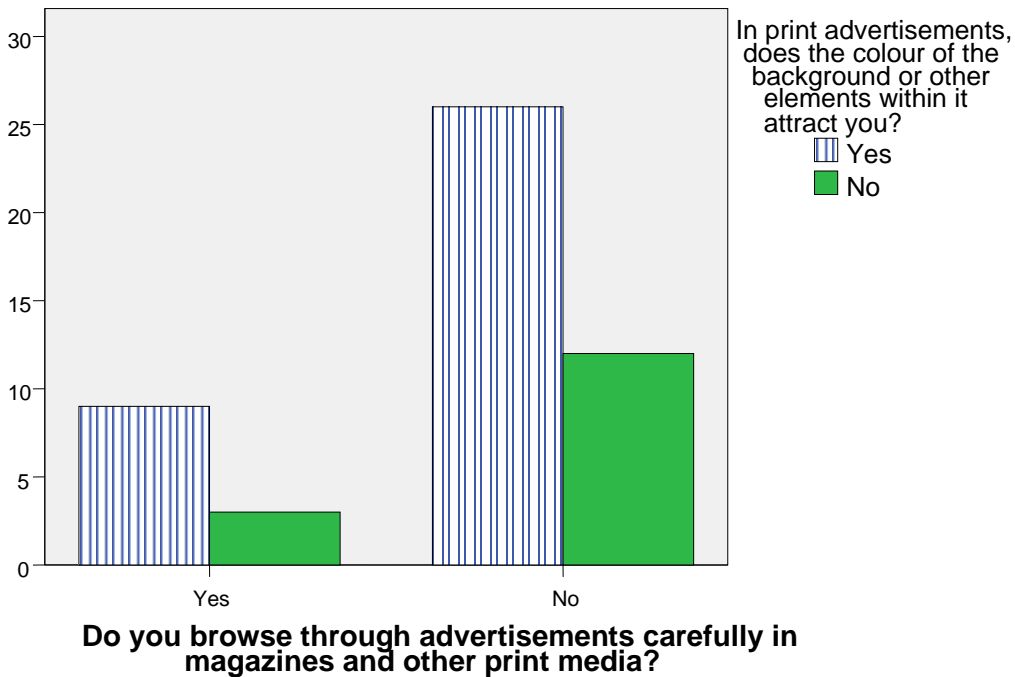
6.2 Cross-Tabulation and General Analysis

The majority of findings are based on the interpretations of various cross-tabulations and analysis carried out:

6.2.1 Most individuals from the sample size do not go through magazines and print media carefully, but they do admit that colourful backgrounds in various advertisements do catch their attention. This corresponds with **H₁ in set 1 & 2 of the hypothesis**. Refer Graph and tabulation below:

Do you browse through advertisements carefully in magazines and other print media?	In print advertisements, does the colour of the background or other elements within it attract you?		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	9	3	12
No	26	12	38
Total	35	15	50

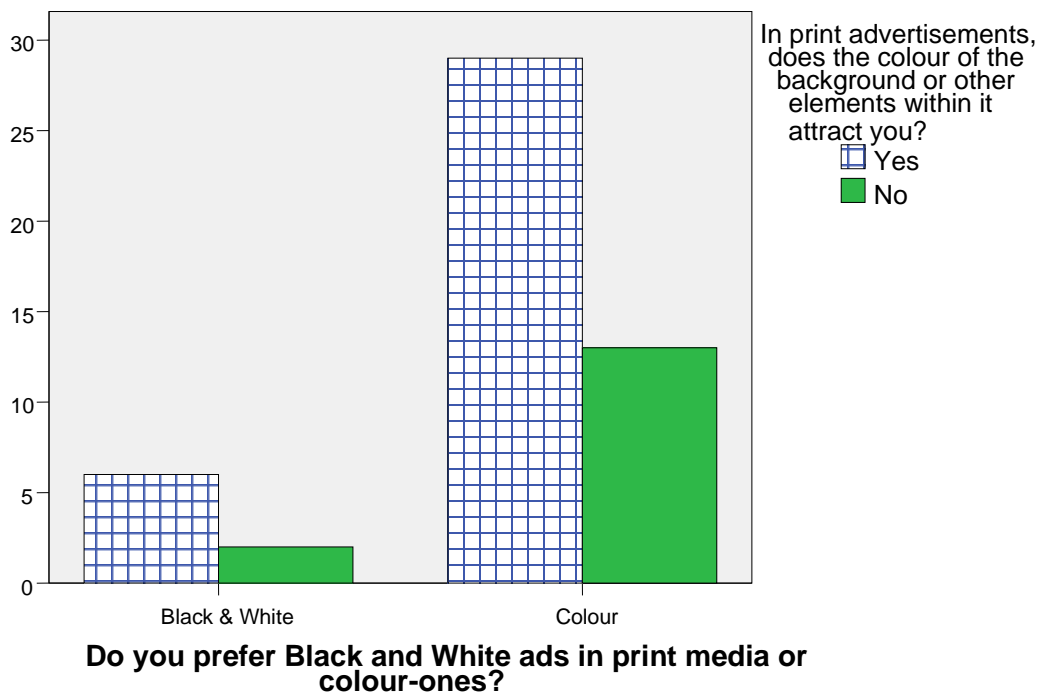
Bar Chart



6.2.2 In the second cross-tabulation another reference is made to the earlier point in comparison to black and white ads. It was found that 72% of the respondents found colourful advertisements more appealing. **H₁ in set 1 & 2 of the hypothesis.** Refer Graph and tabulation below:

Do you prefer Black and White ads in print media or colour-ones?	In print advertisements, does the colour of the background or other elements within it attract you?		Total
	Yes	No	
Black & White	6	2	8
Colour	29	13	42
Total	35	15	50

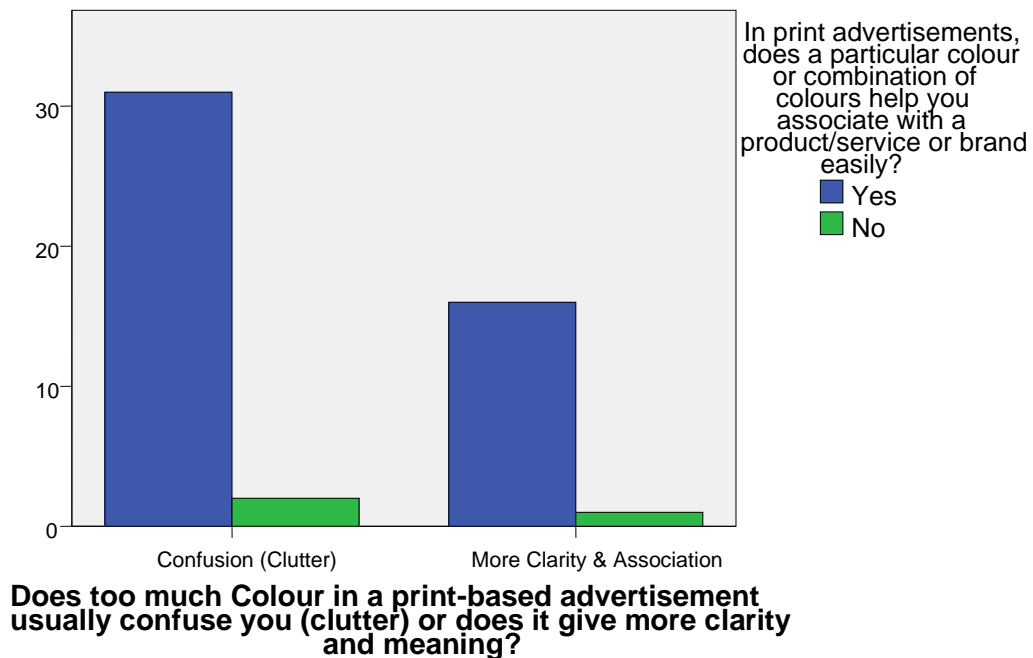
Bar Chart



6.2.3 It was found that 62% respondents found too many colours confusing but 66% also responded that it was easier for them to associate colours with certain products/brands. This majority corresponds with **H₁ in set 1 & 2 of the hypothesis**. Refer Graph and tabulation below:

Does too much Colour in a print-based advertisement usually confuse you (clutter) or does it give more clarity and meaning?	In print advertisements, does a particular colour or combination of colours help you associate with a product/service or brand easily?		Total
	Yes	No	
Confusion (Clutter)	31	2	33
More Clarity & Association	16	1	17
Total	47	3	50

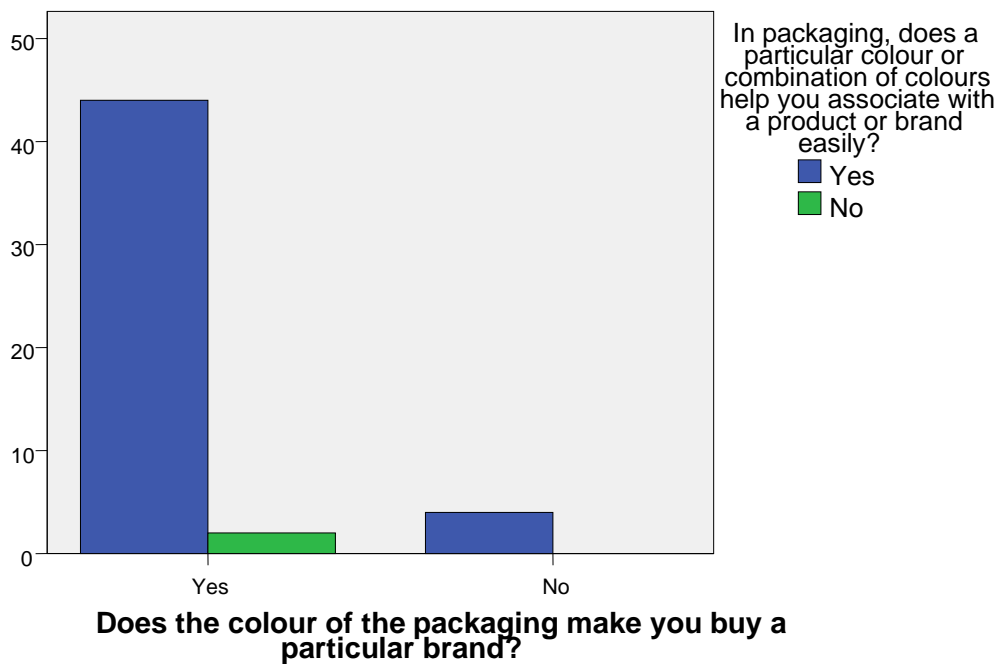
Bar Chart



6.2.4 It was found that 88% of respondents agreed that the colour of the packaging made them buy a particular brand and colours made it easier to associate with products/brands. It corresponds with **H₁ in set 1 & 2 of the hypothesis** Refer Graph and tabulation below:

		In packaging, does a particular colour or combination of colours help you associate with a product or brand easily?		Total
		Yes	No	
Does the colour of the packaging make you buy a particular brand?	Yes	44	2	46
	No	4	0	4
Total		48	2	50

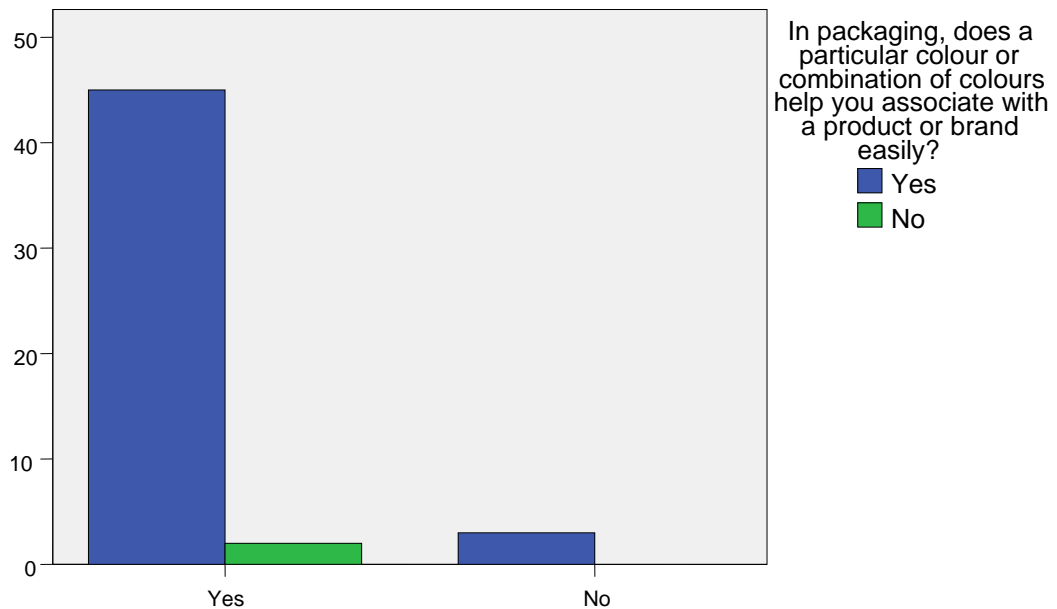
Bar Chart



6.2.5 In this cross-tabulation (refer tabulation & graph below) packaging and print-based advertisements are compared when it comes to colours – it was found that 45 respondents (90%) agreed that colour did help to associate advertisements and packaging easily. This again corresponds with **H₁ in set 1 & 2 of the hypothesis.**

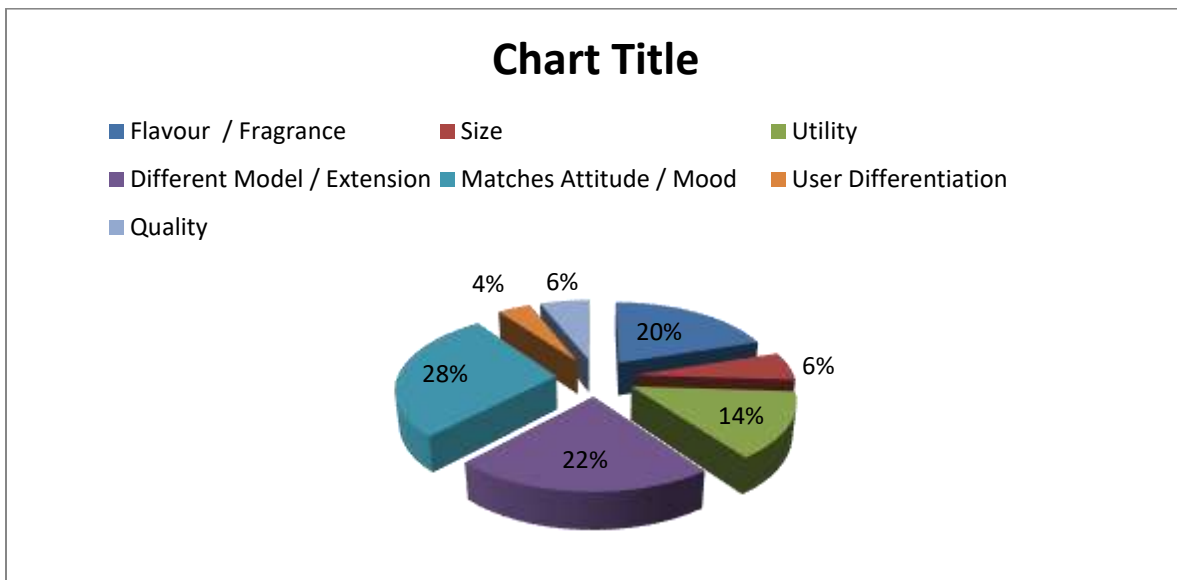
In print advertisements, does a particular colour or combination of colours help you associate with a product/service or brand easily?	In packaging, does a particular colour or combination of colours help you associate with a product or brand easily?		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	45	2	47
No	3	0	3
Total	48	2	50

Bar Chart



In print advertisements, does a particular colour or combination of colours help you associate with a product/service or brand easily?

6.2.6. When asked which reason was most important when different colours are used for different packages within a product line – 28% of respondents wrote ‘Matches Attitude/Mood’, followed by 20% for ‘different model/extension’ and 20% for flavor/fragrance. The remaining were in small percentages (refer graph below)



6.2.7 For the open-ended question, some of the products/ brands which went through a colour/package change in advertisements or actual product that respondents could recall were:

- 6.2.7.1 *Real Juice* – changed packaging from black to colourful with white background and spill-cap
- 6.2.7.2 *Cinthol Soap* – added green colour to its classic red and white combination range
- 6.2.7.3 *Dabur* – changed logo from white and red to natural brown and green
- 6.2.7.4 *Bisleri* - changed from blue to sea green
- 6.2.7.5 *Apple iPod* – from white it changed to various colours
- 6.2.7.6 *Colgate* – classic red & white combination, now offers flavor coloured combination
- 6.2.7.7 *Pepsi* – from classic red & blue on white to blue background, red and slight white
- 6.2.7.8 *Bank of Baroda* – from yellow and orange to complete orange and slight white
- 6.2.7.9 *HDFC* - added blue colour to its logo and ads

As we can see from all of the above cross- tabulations and graphs, the findings complement with the research hypothesis and objectives.

7. Conclusion

Colour manipulates people's actions through the various influences in society; it creates a powerful force that becomes the fabric of our daily lives. Consumers become obsessed with certain colours because of their identification with these colours as part of their personality, lifestyle or appearance. Colours, therefore, do not sell equally well because each colour conveys a different meaning, attracting different personalities and stimulating these personalities to favor one product over the other. When used correctly, the colour scheme could noticeably boost a product's sales or catch attention of a reader or onlooker towards an advertisement. However, when a colour scheme is used incorrectly, the product could end up a complete failure. Today with competition among brands and products so close, advertising professionals as well as packaging professionals need something to give them an edge over the competition where colour will be the solution.

8. Recommendations

- A larger sample size should be undertaken for research on this topic specifically for a particular industry.
- Marketers must focus on colours and emphasize on matching mood with the product utility.
- Before a product/brand is launched its packaging must be approved through a panel of experts in the science of colour and its effects on consumer buying behaviour.
- Marketers must evaluate their brand logos, print-advertisements, labels and overall packaging from time to time post-launch of a product or service.

9. Future Study

After analyzing the topic of colour in the field of marketing, many avenues could be explored in great depth with relevance to this topic:

- The role of each colour and its meaning from a psychological point of view.
- A study of common colour associations with certain products/services must be undertaken to give marketers more perspective on retaining customers and attracting new ones.
- Colour and the packaging process from producer to consumer.
- Certain products and how colour boosts their sales.
- How colour affects readership in Indian magazines.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

[DISCLAIMER – THE DATA OBTAINED FROM THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE SOLELY USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND ITS DETAILS WILL NOT BE SHARED WITH ANY THIRD PARTY]

Kindly Tick the answer you find most suitable.

Please ask researcher if you do not understand a question.

1. Which print based advertisements catch your attention the most?
 Magazines Newspapers Posters Outdoor
2. Do you browse through advertisements carefully in magazines and other print media?
 Yes No
3. In print advertisements, does the colour of the background (or other elements) within it attract you?
 Yes No
4. Do you prefer Black and White ads in print media or colour-ones?
 Black & White Colour
5. Does too much Colour in a print-based advertisement usually confuse you (clutter) or does it give more clarity and meaning?
 Confusion (clutter) More Clarity & Association
6. In print advertisements, does a particular colour or combination of colours help you associate with a product/service or brand easily?
 Yes No
7. Does the packaging of a product play an important part in your purchase?
 Yes No
8. When you are shopping for a product, does the packaging attract you?
 Yes No
9. Does the colour of the packaging make you buy a particular brand?
 Yes No

10. Would a colour change in the current packaging make you switch to a new product?

Yes No

11. Would a colour change in a print-based advertisement impact you negatively and make you switch to another product or brand?

Yes No

12. Which reason do you think is most important when different colours are used for different packages within a product line? (any **1 reason**)

Flavour / Fragrance Size Utility
Different Model/Extension Matches Attitude /Mood
User Differentiation Quality

13. Do you buy products based on the color aspect or other features (quality, price, utility, etc)?

Other features come first Colour is a priority

14. In packaging, does a particular colour or combination of colours help you associate with a product or brand easily?

Yes No

15. Which product do you remember - where a change in colors of their advertisement or package, background, font, logo took place and made you purchase that product?

THESE DETAILS WILL NOT BE SHARED WITH ANY THIRD PARTY

Name (*optional*) _____

Age: 13-18 19-25 25-35 25-49
 50-60 60+

Gender: Male Female

Marital Status: Single Married Other (Separated, Divorced, Widow)

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR TIME