



Article

Psychology of Color in the Fashion Industry

Khadi-Khodjaeva Sevinch¹

1. KIUT UNIVERSITY, 4th-year student

* Correspondence: hadihodjaevasevinch@gmail.com

Abstract: The paper explores the psychological ways through which color serves as a communication and emotional tool in the fashion industry. It is clear from the findings that colors serve as both biologically triggered stimuli and cultural symbols, and fashion firms use the existing meanings of colors to build an emotional relationship with their customers. The article finds that a well-structured knowledge of the psychology of colors would help fashion firms build their brand identity and affect customers' decision-making.

Keywords: color psychology, fashion industry, consumer behavior, brand identity, emotional perception, clothing design, marketing communication

1. Introduction

Color has an intrinsic role in visual human perception and makes a significant impact on emotion, cognition, and behavior well before an analysis of the object is conducted through reason. Within the fashion sector, color operates beyond being a decorative aspect of clothing to become a psychological message that conveys emotions, social standing, self-expression, and intentions of the wearer and the onlooker. Many researchers maintain that color psychology is one of the major factors influencing consumer behavior within the clothes market as it impacts the first impression and emotional reaction that comes even prior to any conscious consideration of the price or practicality of the product [1]. Experimental research in psychology supports this claim: systematic reviews document measurable effects of perceived color on affect, cognition, and behavior [2], and color-in-context theory explains why an identical hue acquires different meanings depending on the situation in which it is encountered [3]. Controlled experiments have shown that red and blue cues produce different cognitive and evaluative outcomes [4], while studies of dress specifically demonstrate that garment color alters social judgement, as in the effect of red clothing on attractiveness ratings [5] and of black uniforms on perceived aggressiveness [6]. Increased competition in the world fashion business has made it particularly important for fashion designers, marketers, and brands to understand how certain colors elicit corresponding psychological reactions and incorporate them into the design and communication process.

Contemporary theories about the nature of color state that it is a combination of physiological phenomena and culturally induced interpretations, that is, the same color can evoke completely different images in the mind of a person depending on his culture, environment, and personal traits [7]. Research on color preference adds a further dimension, explaining liking for particular hues through the average affective response to objects habitually associated with them [8], while psychometric studies show that individual colors carry reproducible emotional profiles across observers [9]. Duality of the

Citation: Sevinch K. Psychology of Color in the Fashion Industry. Central Asian Journal of Arts and Design 2026, 7(4), 1-6.

Received: 10th Sep 2026

Revised: 11th Sep 2026

Accepted: 14th Sep 2026

Published: 21th Sep 2026



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

physiological process and cultural interpretation of colors represents the theoretical basis of the current paper. The objective of this article is to review existing literature on color psychology in the fashion industry and investigate the mechanisms of its influence on consumers' perception and behavior, as well as fashion brand practices. The topicality of this issue is justified by the fact that the choice of colors for clothes has become an integral component of brand creation. Many studies conducted both in Uzbekistan and Russia and abroad indicate that this aspect is poorly investigated but very important for the fashion industry.

2. Materials and Methods

The current study is based on a qualitative methodological approach, which relies solely on secondary literature. Such an approach has been chosen since the subject matter of the current research - the symbolic and psychological meaning of color in fashion - has already developed a significant theoretical base that does not require any further data collection but rather requires some synthesis. In its turn, the review of the literature is conducted along three main topics, which coincide with the sources used. The first one is connected with the general theory of the psychological perception of color, elaborated in the works of Bazyma, who provided the systematization of theoretical and practical aspects of color psychology, proving that color perception occurs through biological and cultural coding [7].

The same basic framework finds a reflection in Uzbek literature, which discusses the psychological effect of the colors of clothes on people's mental state and offers effective ways of choosing colors for costumes based on the idea that colors have a strong effect on one's individual psychological state and social image [10]. An Uzbek study carried out at Termez State University further extends this research by looking at the psychological effects of different colored fabrics, namely the effects of red, blue, green, yellow, and black colors that are being utilized in different spheres [11].

Second thematic strand is related to the direct connection of color and consumer behavior in apparel industry. Research conducted internationally has found that color is considered one of the key criteria in decision making for purchasing clothes due to consumer interpretations of color being influenced by his/her beliefs, culture, and attitude [1]. Such a point of view is confirmed by a more recent study of a quantitative nature which demonstrates that such aspects as mood regulation, consumer characteristics, and the usefulness of color influence purchase decision making process [12]. A qualitative study conducted in parallel has looked into the connection between consumer choice of color in clothing and consumption as a whole, proving that color is a medium for communication and expression [13].

Theme three considers the business or branding aspect of color psychology. From an industry standpoint, researchers have identified how certain emotions have been linked with various colors; for instance, red indicates energy and boldness whereas blue is representative of calmness and reliability, and have also identified how major fashion and consumer brands intentionally choose colors as part of their business strategy [14]. Marketing research provides an empirical basis for this practice, showing that hue, saturation, and brightness shape brand personality perceptions, with red conveying excitement and blue conveying competence [15]. From a generation-specific perspective, it has been found that incongruity between the colors chosen by a brand and the emotions expected from a particular generation, especially Generation Z, can diminish brand trust and loyalty, making color choices commercially significant [16].

Cross-cultural studies suggest otherwise regarding the universal meaning associated with colors, considering that studies involving Chinese consumers have proven that the culturally coded meaning of certain colors, for instance the automatic association between

red and Chinese consumer identity, do not necessarily lead to an immediate buying decision and that spaciousness and distance influence the impact of color on purchase intentions [17]. Russian literature further supports the socially constructed perspective of color through the study of the way in which the color of clothes conveys information about one's emotional state, social standing, and financial well-being; and how consumers utilize color cues to form opinions about other people [18]. All in all, these sources of literature indicate that color psychology in fashion goes beyond the idea of a definitive table of emotions associated with colors.

3. Results and Discussion

The synthesis of the reviewed literature allows for several interconnected conclusions regarding the function of color in the fashion industry. First, color operates simultaneously on two levels, a physiological level involving immediate sensory and emotional reaction, and a symbolic level involving learned cultural and social meaning, and fashion brands that succeed in aligning both levels tend to achieve stronger emotional resonance with their target audience [1], [7]. Second, the specific emotional associations attached to individual colors, while broadly consistent across much of the reviewed material, are not universally fixed, since cultural context can significantly alter how a given hue is interpreted, as demonstrated by research on Chinese consumer responses to red [17]. This finding is illustrated clearly by common branding practice, summarized in the figure below.



Figure 1. Psychological associations and marketing applications of red, yellow, blue, and green in branding and packaging

This figure consolidates a pattern that recurs throughout the reviewed literature, namely that red is systematically deployed by brands seeking to project strength, passion, and appetite stimulation, yellow is associated with optimism and creative energy, blue communicates loyalty, trust, and precision, and green signals freshness, safety, and environmental responsibility [1], [14]. The consistency of these associations across unrelated product categories, from beverages to technology to food retail, supports the argument advanced in the literature that certain color meanings possess a degree of cross industry stability even as their specific cultural weighting can shift [14], [18]. At the same time, the fact that these associations are actively engineered through marketing rather than passively inherited confirms that color psychology functions as a deliberate strategic tool

rather than a neutral aesthetic choice. The second figure extends this analysis from branding and packaging into the domain of personal apparel and garment color selection.



Figure 2. Psychological impressions associated with different shirt colors, ranging from traditional and conservative to confident and assured

Figure 2 demonstrates that color psychology extends beyond corporate branding into the everyday act of individual dressing, where the choice of a beige shirt communicates traditionalism and conservatism, a red or orange shirt projects dynamism and sociability, a teal or purple garment suggests calmness or creative unconventionality, and a deep pink or fuchsia shirt is read as an expression of confidence and assurance. This pattern corresponds directly to the theoretical claims found in the Uzbek and Russian literature, which argue that clothing color functions as a nonverbal communicative device through which individuals signal emotional state, social role, and personal identity to those around them [10], [11], [18]. The convergence between the corporate branding logic shown in Figure 1 and the personal wardrobe logic shown in Figure 2 suggests that the same underlying psychological principles of color association operate at both the institutional and individual level, reinforcing the argument that color psychology constitutes a unifying framework across the entire fashion ecosystem, from manufacturing and brand strategy to individual consumer self-presentation. A further observation emerging from the discussion concerns generational and demographic variation, since research on Generation Z consumers indicates that younger audiences respond most strongly to brands whose color choices align with contemporary digital and cultural sensibilities, and that a failure to update color strategy according to shifting demographic expectations can result in weakened brand affinity even when traditional color theory is correctly applied [16]. This suggests that while the core physiological and symbolic mechanisms of color perception remain relatively stable, their commercial application must be continuously recalibrated to reflect evolving consumer identities. Overall, the discussion confirms that color psychology in fashion operates as a layered system in which

universal perceptual tendencies, culturally specific meanings, and commercially engineered associations interact to shape consumer emotion and behavior.

4. Conclusion

The analysis presented in this article confirms that color functions as one of the most influential yet frequently underestimated psychological instruments available to the fashion industry. The reviewed Uzbek, Russian, and international literature converges on the understanding that color perception combines an innate physiological dimension with a learned cultural and social dimension, and that this combination allows color to operate as a powerful nonverbal language within both branding and personal dress. The comparative analysis of the two figures examined in the results section demonstrates that the same fundamental color associations, strength and passion in red, trust and precision in blue, freshness in green, and confidence in vivid saturated hues, appear consistently across both institutional branding contexts and individual clothing choices, suggesting a coherent psychological logic underlying color use throughout the fashion system. At the same time, the literature cautions against treating color meaning as fixed or universal, since cultural context and generational identity can meaningfully alter how specific hues are interpreted and valued by consumers. For practitioners in fashion design, marketing, and brand management, these findings imply that effective color strategy requires not only familiarity with established psychological associations but also sensitivity to the specific cultural and demographic context in which a garment or brand will be received. Future research building on this literature based analysis could productively investigate how digital and social media environments are reshaping the transmission and interpretation of fashion color symbolism, particularly among younger and more culturally diverse consumer populations.

REFERENCES

- [1] J. S. Kumar, "The psychology of colour influences consumers' buying behaviour: A diagnostic study," *Ushus Journal of Business Management*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 1-13, 2017.
- [2] A. J. Elliot and M. A. Maier, "Color psychology: Effects of perceiving color on psychological functioning in humans," *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 65, pp. 95-120, 2014.
- [3] A. J. Elliot and M. A. Maier, "Color-in-context theory," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 45, pp. 61-125, 2012.
- [4] R. Mehta and R. Zhu, "Blue or red? Exploring the effect of color on cognitive task performances," *Science*, vol. 323, no. 5918, pp. 1226-1229, Feb. 2009.
- [5] A. J. Elliot and D. Niesta, "Romantic red: Red enhances men's attraction to women," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 95, no. 5, pp. 1150-1164, 2008.
- [6] M. G. Frank and T. Gilovich, "The dark side of self- and social perception: Black uniforms and aggression in professional sports," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 74-85, 1988.
- [7] B. A. Bazyma, *Psychology of Color: Theory and Practice*. Moscow, Russia: Rech, 2005, 205 p. (in Russian).
- [8] S. E. Palmer and K. B. Schloss, "An ecological valence theory of human color preference," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, vol. 107, no. 19, pp. 8877-8882, May 2010.
- [9] L.-C. Ou, M. R. Luo, A. Woodcock, and A. Wright, "A study of colour emotion and colour preference. Part I: Colour emotions for single colours," *Color Research and Application*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 232-240, Jun. 2004.
- [10] Sh. U. Turaboyev and H. D. Dehqonova, "Studying and scientific analysis of clothing colours." [Online]. Available: https://ojs.rmasav.com/index.php/ojs/article/download/590/ARTC_1_7_B_20/566 (accessed Sep. 17, 2026). (in Uzbek).

-
- [11] N. Mamataliyeva, "The psychological effects of colored fabrics," in Proc. Conf., Termez State University, Termez, Uzbekistan, 2024.
 - [12] Salamah, "Are colors influential in changing the attitudes and behaviors of customers in their purchase decision making?," *International Journal of Business and Management*, vol. 18, no. 6, 2023.
 - [13] M. Durrani and K. Niinimäki, "Colour matters: An exploratory study of the role of colour in clothing consumption choices," *Clothing Cultures*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 219-241, 2021.
 - [14] "Colour psychology in fashion," *Fashion Law Journal*, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://fashionlawjournal.com/colour-psychology-in-fashion/> (accessed Sep. 17, 2026).
 - [15] L. I. Labrecque and G. R. Milne, "Exciting red and competent blue: The importance of color in marketing," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, vol. 40, no. 5, pp. 711-727, Sep. 2012.
 - [16] S. Mandal and A. J. Bhalerao, "Impact of color psychology on clothing brand perception among Generation Z consumers," *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 15856-15860, 2025.
 - [17] D. Zhao and F. Guan, "Chinese consumers do not always respond to red: The influence of colors on perceived distance, spaciousness, and purchase intention of Chinese consumers," *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 13, 2022, Art. no. 1028425.
 - [18] "The influence of clothing colour on the emotional and social demands of consumers," *CyberLeninka*. [Online]. Available: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/vliyanie-tsveta-v-odezhde-na-emotsionalnye-i-sotsialnye-zaprosy-potrebiteley> (accessed Sep. 17, 2026). (in Russian).