

Chapter 7 Color in the persuasive strategy

Lia Luzzatto, www.lialuzzatto.it

Abstract

As both a scholar and a teacher, I have often wondered which was the best way to bring students to 'color', this mysterious object that poses countless questions whose answers are often not unique. And how the acquired knowledge could be applied in communication with a particular reference to advertising in which color becomes the subject and object of persuasion. In marketing, as in advertising, color frequently plays a leading role, its power of suggestion is based on a sensorial complex that requires the implementation of cognitive, psychological and perceptive knowledge; so in the Project Work of the Color Design & Tehcnology master, which provided for a practical application of the theoretical part previously carried out, I turned to students with a path suitable for stimulating their creativity seen as a dynamic process capable of producing innovative and valuable ideas and inventions, and giving voice to emotions, two necessary factors for any communication project. In addition to the visual part, I insisted on the importance of translating chromatic emotions into words and then also apply the reverse path. In communication and especially in advertising, in fact, the visual part is usually accompanied by the verbal one and it is in this perceptive-emotional whole that the message is realized. We also know that vision imposes itself as a strong cognitive metaphor to confront with mental and semiotic procedures.

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Communication, creativity, project

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1. Introduction

How persuasive is color and how much? To answer this question, it is appropriate to give a look at that part of communication theory called 'pragmatics' that deals with the effects on behavior and indicates three variables of equal importance in the formulation of the message: syntax, semantics and, of course, pragmatics.

Both the numerical (verbal) and the analogical (non-verbal) language are articulated according to more or less complex syntax and a more or less rich semantic charge of relationship. Thus while the verbal language regarding even a complex syntax is usually scarce in the semantic field of relation, the analogue one can behave in the opposite way: rich in semantics and poor in syntax.

Syntax concerns the structuring of the message, semantics the meanings also transmitted by the message, pragmatics concerns the influence that the message as a whole has on behavior; it is the pragmatics that can ultimately be considered the purpose for which one communicates and that, in persuasive communication, looks at the final result, i.e. whether the message has managed to induce the persuaded to voluntarily do what the persuader wants and pays particular attention to the formulation of the message both at a syntactic and content level.

Color fits into this complexity in a transversal way; we know that it can respect perceptive rules and a compositional syntax, but we also know that it can subvert them to surprise and amaze, and that it is important to know and use its sensitive, allegorical, symbolic and emotional charge, that is semantics.

Keeping these premises in mind, I carried out my lessons by reminding that the use of color in persuasive communication manages to integrate the aesthetic content with the unconscious, emotional, meaning-bearing one, as it refers to something else than itself: as a sign in a conventional way, as symbol and emotion in an evocative way capable of producing suggestions and synaesthesia slipping into other perceptive spaces.

2. From the visual medium to the linguistic one

Each episode of communication activates a participation of the senses.

Color, like all visual communication, does not escape this definition and offers itself to perception as a sensorial complexity that includes the emotional and cognitive field: factors which must not be ignored in its design.

Keeping in mind this belief of mine, to stimulate individual and collective creative abilities, to bring conscious and unconscious mental resources to

consciousness and therefore to language and to increase spontaneous associative processes, in my courses I propose an exercise very similar to the realization of a mind map, evocative of one's own experiences, to be compared and enriched later in the work group.

The mind map serves to express, through the linguistic module, the qualities of the visual module, it has the function of stimulating creativity through an evocative and emotional action that leads to consciousness, through a wealth of words, concepts and associations in a coherent structure that makes also inedited links and connections available; in summary, it is a productive way to order and relate concepts and keywords with a clear and broad overview, in a sort of brain storming with oneself to collect one's internal and external perceptions, unconscious mental resources - those that derive from personal experiences - bring them to consciousness, and give them a linguistic aspect to be able to make them available to creativity and therefore to the project.

This is a useful exercise: to strengthen one's perceptive activity by processing subjective experience with words; to refine and increase the imaginative potential of fantasy; to enrich any communication with possibilities.

With mind maps, each branch is connected to the chosen color, placed in the center, from which all the words and emotions that the color arouses and which will then be sorted by fields start. Within each field, you can then search for the key words of color communication following the agreed mental or narrative path.

The chosen color or contrast will appear in the center of a multitude of nouns and adjectives in a map of possible connections that allow to express through the numerical-verbal module what is in the domain of the semantic-relational module, that is, emotions, sensations, inductions and synesthetic associations [1]. A wealth of possibilities to be used for any project, from design to persuasive communication, to emotional marketing.

3. From the linguistic medium to the visual

In the previous chapter we saw how important it is to express the qualities of the visual module through the linguistic module. The next step is to do the opposite, i.e. move from the linguistic to the visual register with the use of mood boards that allow you to define the direction you intend give to a project, and help the designer in the initial stages of creation, when the head is a whirlwind of ideas, images and sensations, to verify that all the elements are coherent with each other.

Mood boards, as we know, are used in various fields: in interior design to show what kind of ambience the new furniture will create; in fashion to provide an idea of the sensations that the product will evoke and show what it is inspired by., in web design to define the ambience of the site; in advertising to highlight the emotions you want to arouse and in color to communicate the feeling, the concept, the mood that the chosen color evokes.

In our project, the mind map and mood boards are closely linked. Course participants are invited to choose from the mind map some coordinated keywords to represent a concept, an ambience or a situation to be realized in the mood, so as to give voice to a first vision of what the brand or product, which focus on a certain color, want to communicate. In this phase we fully enter into the semantics of color as Claudio Widmann points out when he writes: "it is certainly confirmed that a semantic area exists, in which colors take on meanings that go far beyond their physical appearance and that there is a solid relationship between the meanings attributed to colors and the social context within these meanings mature" [2].

4. Color idea first drafts: development phases of a brand

Both the mind map and the mood board are an aspect of the initial phases to creatively and consonant design an 'icon' color for a brand which wants to enter the market or simply change its appearance or for a new product that wants to stand out in a salient way in the competition.

We know that while the brand must convey values such as: trust, respect for the environment, honesty, seriousness, joy, youth, etc.; The product, which instead belongs to the category of economic goods, must have objective characteristics, but also not objective and emotional ones, capable of satisfying a consumer's need and interpreting a dream.

In both cases the color, relying on its semantic and perceptive charge, can be a determining element and in some cases it can interpret both the brand and the product. During the course I proposed a working method, able to satisfy this hypothesis, which involves a series of steps, starting with the mind map which facilitates the generation of ideas and even unusual links; continuing with the selection of the concepts to be expressed.

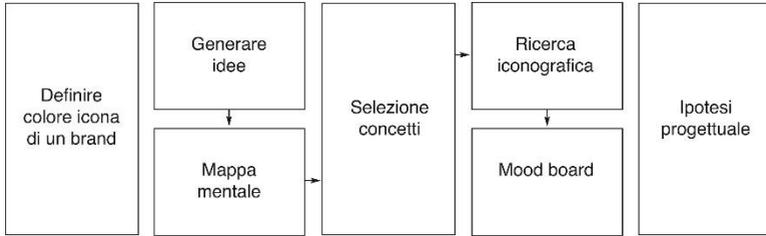


Fig.1 Design scheme

We then move on to iconographic research for the creation of a meaningful mood board and finally, we work on the design hypothesis which is also organized as a mind map.



Fig. 2 Creation of a mind map for brand and product.

5. Color in motion: the animatic

It is well known that color often plays a decisive role in advertising, this also applies to TV commercials that are characterized by the choice of a precise color capable of

arouse an imaginary, imprint itself in the memory and create an ambience permeated with the feelings that the moving color conveys. In this case, a careful choice can help determine the success of the product. This is the case of many advertisements, especially those related to perfumes, where the difficulty of describing the fragrance finds a powerful help in the synaesthesia that color is able to arouse.

I addressed this topic in the Master with the design and implementation of an 'animatic' on a certain color or aimed at a product that had color as the protagonist. The animatic, which can be defined as a pre-visualization of the commercial, can be considered as a moving storyboard with the advantage that music and words can be inserted into an animatic.

To create the animatic I chose a design path that took into consideration the different aspects of color: aesthetic, synaesthetic, emotional and communicative. The first step was to create the mental map of the chosen colors, therefore, by putting into practice the transition from numerical (verbal) to analogical (non-verbal), the related mood boards were created based on the keywords chosen in the mind map, respecting communicative intentions. The story that emerged and that we want to tell was written on the trail of the mind map and the mood board.



Cozy

Conservative

Coffee

Warm

Intense

The next step involved the choice of short videos consonant with the chosen color, the ambience created in the mood board and the story we wanted to create.

At this point everything was ready for the realization of the animatic.

For its final construction it was necessary to have or download an easy editing system on the computer or smartphone, record the story and / or a musical carpet, which gave the right rhythm to the video, in harmony with the chosen color, with its representation and with the atmosphere aroused by the story.



*A warm fragrance for your everyday life.
Let it be a part of your routine, like a cup of coffee in the morning.
Intense and cozy: the new perfume by Burberry.*

6. Conflict of interest declaration

The author declares no conflict of interest.

7. Funding source declaration

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8. References

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Sources of illustrations

Fig. 2 project carried out by the students of my Theory of Color course, at the Fondazione Accademia di Comunicazione in Milan.

Fig. 3 and 4 project by Sandhiya Jayaprakash Brindha, Eugenia Matilde Marchetti, master Color design & technology, Milan 2020

Author Biography. Lia Luzzatto

Essayist, publicist and chromatic consultant. Professor of Color Theory in university faculties, she participates and organizes seminars and courses in Italy and abroad. She is a speaker at national and international conferences and conventions on color issues in fashion and communication.

She is the author of the book *China: Chronicle of the Five Colors* published by Franco Angeli and co-author of the volumes: *Colori e Moda* (Giunti Bompiani, Milan), *Lezioni di Colore* (published by Il Castello, Milan), *Colore & Colori* (published by Il Castello, Milan), *The persuasive color* (ed. Il Castello, Milan), *The colors of dressing* (ed. Hoepli, Milan), *The meaning of colors in ancient civilizations* (ed. Bompiani, Milan), *Knowing and understanding color* (ed. Il Castello, Milan), *The Language of Color* (ed. Il Castello, Milan), *Read Your Personality* (ed. Il Castello, Milan). He has also participated in numerous collective books.

Former member of CISST (Italian Association for the History of Textiles) and member of ADI (Association for Industrial Design), she is member of ECD (Environmental Color Design) Buenos Aires, Argentina and Color Study Group, Stockholm, Sweden. She is a founding member of the Gruppo del Colore, the Italian Color Association, of which she was a member of the Presidential Council and the Scientific Committee for three terms.

Notes

[1] Ave Appiano, *Manuale di immagine*, Pag. 30, Ed. Meltemi, Roma 1999

[2] Claudio Widmann, *Il simbolismo dei colori*, cap.I, Piovan Editore, Abano Terme 1988.