

## **How Color Affects Mood**

and Enhances the Automobile Sales Process

### ***A Summary of Research Studies Presented to O'Meara Ford by Teammates Commercial Interiors***

There is no doubt that color and ambiance play an important role in designing a space and creating specific moods within that space. Since the early 1930s, researchers and psychologists have conducted dozens of studies that prove this theory.

Leatrice Eiseman, founder and director of the Eiseman Center for Color Information and Training, and Executive Director of the Pantone Color Institute, states in her book *Colors for Your Every Mood*, "Color is the single most important design element in creating spaces that reflect mood and style."

When it comes to designing a selling environment, marketing psychologists advise that a lasting color impression is made within 90 seconds and accounts for 60% of the acceptance or rejection of an object, place, individual or circumstance. Because of this quick response by the consumer, researchers have spent considerable time studying which colors best suit specific products and induce the consumer to buy. We can surmise that red makes us hungry, because every fast food chain we know uses red in their logos, restaurant environments and marketing materials. In fact, research supports this conclusion.

Blue is the color of constancy and truth. It is ideal in often anxiety-charged selling environments because it brings tranquility and calm and reduces blood pressure and respiration rate. In his groundbreaking book *The Luscher Color Test*, Dr. Max Luscher says of dark-blue surroundings "Anyone in a situation as balanced, harmonious and tension-free as this feels settled, united and secure."

Dr Arthur Ellis states in his color studies that blue makes consumers feel more in control and actually makes the pace of things seem slower and more manageable. In fact, in all the studies we reviewed, blue seemed the perfect alter ego to red, which tends to provoke the "fight or flight" impulse and raise blood pressure. Some different hues of blue - gray-violet and silver-gray, seem to produce many of the same feelings as the blues: calmness and tranquility. It is important to note that too much blue in a setting, especially dark-blue, may seem depressing.

Yellow is the color closest to light and is seen as joyful, outgoing and open, often giving a feeling of youthful vigor. Because of its friendly feel, consumers feel welcomed to sales settings that include mild yellows. Dr. Luscher, considered the father of color research, states that buyers seem to feel a bit "more relaxed and uninhibited" and have an "expectation for greater happiness" that is ideal in a buying situation. He continues to say that "yellow presses forward toward the new, the modern and the developing. Yellow always triggers a light, free, open feeling...a liberating, loosening effect. Therefore it corresponds to a definite sense of freedom and self-development."

Eiseman states that yellow is great for opening up cramped and dark areas and "draws people in and through the space," which makes consumers more likely to feel comfortable exploring a sales area instead of holding back. She does note the importance of using the right yellow hue. Yellows with a green tint tend to turn off

consumers and the brighter, more garish hues may cheapen the product.

Light browns and beiges are the colors of hearth and home and represent nurturing. The down-to-earth and "real" feelings that these colors emanate help a buyer or customer feel on the same level with the salesperson, that they are not "looking down their nose" at the buyer. Eiseman says that brown represents "roots, a steady, stable source of security, comfort and normalcy." Beige gives feelings of warmth. Dr. Benjamin J. Kouwer says in his book, *Color Their Characters*, "It possesses a sturdiness, a strong powerfulness" and gives a feeling of stability that anxious buyers often appreciate.

Green hues often lead to thoughts of nature and country instead of city, which some consumers find soothing. Indian mystics see the color as representing balance and harmony. Dr. Luscher says that greens appeals to consumers because they feel their "opinions will prevail," helping the buyer feel more in control of the situation. Dr Kurt Goldstein found that "...green induces a state of tranquility and a withdrawal from external pressures which occurs on both a motor and emotional level" making a buyer feel at ease. Many consumers say that they associated green with the sea - calm, spacious and cool.

While orange tones are usually seen as brassy and loud, when used sparingly they may be interpreted by buyers as gregarious, fun-loving and full of energy. Eiseman states that orange, when used correctly, is a wonderful "attention-getter." Orange should be used in moderation, however, as it can "cheapen" a product in much the same way as yellow.

Clearly colors, their tones and hues affect mood and dictate the "personality" of a space and how comfortable buyers are within that space. Similarly, adequate and creative lighting is one of the most important features used to highlight a dealership. More and more car dealerships, for example, are incorporating "daylighting" into the design of retail selling spaces - that is, using lighting that emulates natural light. Some have even included skylights in their building plans.

In fact, The California Board for Energy Efficiency commissioned a study titled "Skylighting and Retail Sales." The research, completed by the Hescong Mahone Group, found that stores with lighting that simulates natural light or that from skylights, experienced a sales index significantly higher than stores without that type of lighting. People said the store felt cleaner and more spacious and open.

When reviewing the above information, it is important to note that response to color is inherited and learned. Carlton Wagner, founder of the Wagner Institute for Color Research in Santa Barbara, California and one of the country's leading authorities on color research, notes that several factors affect individuals' responses. These include socioeconomic status, education, sex, age, intelligence and regional attitudes making generalizations difficult. Simply stated: the personal tastes of consumers more significant than any scientific research.