

The "Credibility" of Color in Cosmetics: How Cultural Consensus on Mainstream Colors Drives Consumer Purchases

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Abstract. Nowadays, in the cosmetics market, packaging color becomes the first and the most important thing that consumer would consider. Sometimes, it's even the only cue that people would consider, especially in online shopping. This study talks about the concept of color credibility to see how certain colors are perceived to be trustworthy and effective in cosmetics through cultural understanding. Based on these mainstream cosmetic colors, the research focuses on how familiar colors affect what consumers expect and whether they want to buy a product. The first step is to collect information from social media reports and some market trend reports. This study will explore relationships between color and the function of different products. The findings suggest that products using culturally expected colors will make people feel more reliable, while a huge difference from these norms could cause hesitation or be perceived as risky. This study will discuss how packaging color causes the trust formation in cosmetic industry.

Keywords: color credibility, cosmetic packaging, consumer perception

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

The competition in the cosmetic industry increases as days past, packaging now has a role is not only for basic protection [1]. It began to function as a platform where brands express their brand value and main ideas to their potential consumers. In the many visual elements, color is often the one that could be noticed immediately, and they are hard to be ignored. Packaging colors influence consumer attention and emotional engagement, which in turn affects consumer preference and purchase potential [2].

This reliance on color has become especially noticeable in online retail settings. When consumers are unable to experience the texture, scent, or performance before buying them, visual information could shape expectations [3]. In this case, packaging color works as an implicit signal. It guides consumers to make the decision and judgement about how the product functions and whether it is same and effective. Now, the packages not only works out as decorative purposes, color becomes part of the trust-building process that occurs before a purchase is made.

1.2. Color, culture, and consumer perception

Research on color in marketing stated that color influences attention, emotion, and memory, and that it can also affect purchase intention [4]. Studies in consumer psychology and neuromarketing also suggest that certain colors are more likely to attract attention or cause stronger emotional responses in cosmetic sector [5]. McKinsey & Company's State of Beauty 2025 report highlights shifting consumer behaviors and the growing importance of digital and visual engagement in the beauty market. Meanwhile, 72% of consumers purchase would be influenced directly by packages [6]. These findings help explain why color remains a central concern in packaging design.

At the same time, scholars emphasized that color meanings are shaped by cultural and social contexts but do not exist as universal psychological responses [7]. In the beauty industry, color is closely related to the ideas of attractiveness, purity, youth, and effectiveness that is expected culturally. The preferences for particular hues reflect broader social values and shared visual conventions, rather than individual taste alone.

People often treat culture as just background information or use it to compare different countries. Usually, the way people buy things is affected by their culture and what they believe [4]. Not much attention has been paid to how people's shared ideas about color make packaging seem trustworthy. There is also little research looking at how common color ideas in a culture help people feel that a cosmetic product can be trusted.

1.3. Research question and contribution

In order to make up for this gap, here is the main question: How does cultural consensus about mainstream cosmetic colors establish "color credibility," and how does this credibility influence consumer purchasing?

The first contribution is that the study talks about the concept of color credibility. The second contribution it offers is a cultural explanation for the relationship between packaging color and purchasing decision.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Definition of color credibility

In this study, color credibility refers to how consumers perceives the color of the package and deciding whether it's trustworthy. This process will happen before actually buying and trying the product.

2.2. Framework description

The framework (Figure 1) shows the process about how color influences consumer purchase. Firstly, when consumers see the culturally agreed colors of the package, they will form a sense about how the product may be about, such as blue suggesting calmness, and red refers to intensity or expressiveness [8]. These expectations then contribute to perceptions of trust and reliability, forming color credibility. A high level of color credibility could reduce perceived risk and make consumers more willing to purchase the product [9].

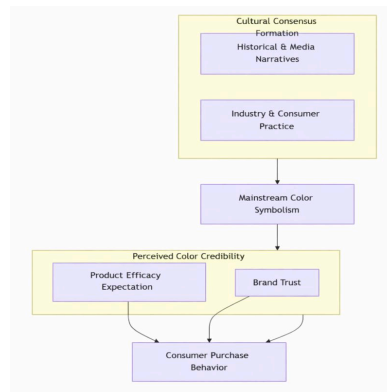


Figure 1. Cultural consensus formation

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study uses an mixed-methods approach. This paper is not establishing a causal relationships. The research is about identifying patterns and the associations between packaging color, cultural meanings, and consumer purchasing tendencies. The study focuses on perceived purchase preparation but not any observed purchasing behavior.

3.2. Data sources

This paper is using two main types of data. First, we will observe the social media content to see how consumers describe the relationship between color and cosmetic function in everyday language. Second, we will review some available industry reports and market trend analyses to identify dominant color usage and strategies within the cosmetics market.

3.3. Data analysis

The analysis includes grouping recurring color–function associations, and then comparing these associations across different data sources. This comparison helps identify consistent patterns that reflect shared cultural agreements rather than individual opinions.

4. Findings

4.1. Mainstream color associations in cosmetics

The results show that it is actually well known that some color are linked with some specific products in the cosmetics market. Consumers could guess what is the product for based on the colors. q2 Packaging that uses familiar colors usually looks trustworthy and easy to identify to people who are shopping. When people see colors they expect, they could quickly buildup trust and increase sales.

4.2. Perceived risk of deviating from color norms

When products uses a "strange" color that is totally different from the norms, consumers would not quickly trust this product at first. This may cause consumers to perceive the product as not trust

worthy and not effective, this leads to a decline of sales. Especially in the condition of online shopping, since there are many other alternatives provided.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Key findings

The finding of this study is that mainstream colors that is used in cosmetic packaging could gain credibility among consumers. Packaging nowadays performs not only as a role of a beautiful outlook or a protective layer, it's a signal that is based on cultural agreements about colors and could help increase consumer purchases.

5.2. Theoretical and practical implications

This research contributes to packaging studies, since it provides information and findings about how to use cultural consensus to influences consumer behavior. The findings guide many companies, we can see through the findings that creating relationship with culturally accepted color conventions can help reduce consumer uncertainty.

5.3. Limitations and future research

This study are using data that are not being experimented and does not directly record actual purchasing behavior. Future research could combine surveys or experimental methods with behavioral data to further examine the causal role of color credibility in consumer decision-making.

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