

Color Affects Product Perception
Supervisory Team: Dr Iina Ikonen, Professor Nancy Puccinelli

As they shop, consumers see products in many different colors. What effect does the color of a product have on purchase intentions? What causes consumers to choose a product in one color over another? And do these choice drivers vary according to product characteristics, such as whether the product is a vice or a virtue?

Prior literature suggests that red exerts influences on consumers' affect, behavior, and decision making. For example, it changes perceptions of a brand's personality by enhancing consumers' excitement (Labrecque and Milne 2012). Color advertising outperforms black-and-white forms (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1995), and prices in red appear to offer better deals for people engaged in low involvement decision making (Puccinelli et al. 2013). The use of a red background during online auctions and negotiations can induce aggression though, causing competitive behavior and thus higher bid jumps during auctions or decreased price offers during negotiations (Bagchi and Cheema 2013). Thus, red influences consumer perception through affective states.

Beyond excitement and aggression, red also is widely linked to romantic attraction. With a series of experiments, Elliot and Niesta (2008) demonstrate that red, relative to other colors, causes men to perceive women as more desirable and attractive and increases their spending intention. These effects appear to occur outside awareness; they do not influence men's overall evaluation of the women's intelligence, kindness, or likeability (Elliot and Niesta 2008). Thus, in particular contexts, red appears to carry sexual meaning for men and signals an opportunity to satisfy their mating goals (Elliot and Niesta 2008). Based on these ideas, it then seems possible that that red functions uniquely as a proxy for immediate gratification, influencing for example consumers' level of deliberation and product preferences. In general, this project will look to understand the effect of the color red (in comparison to other colors) on consumers' decision-making and behaviors as well as to identify potential ways to counteract such effects.