

DOI 10.26886/2520-7474.1(51)2022.1

UDC 76.01:766

**CULTURAL-AESTHETIC COMPONENT  
OF COLOR IN ADVERTISING DESIGN**

**Svitlana Pryshchenko, Prof. Dr. Hab. in Art Studies, Dr. Hab. in Design**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3482-6858>

e-mail: akademiki@ukr.net

State University of Infrastructure and Technologies, Ukraine, Kyiv

**Tetyana Senchuk, Ph.D. in Design, Associate Professor**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2933-9724>

State University of Infrastructure and Technologies, Ukraine, Kyiv

*This research on the cultural-aesthetic component of color in Advertising Design aims at systematizing visual means and defining their complex functional features in the communication space. The problems of advertising are visualization, stylistics, and development tendencies. Methodology is based on socio-cultural, axiological, and comparative methods. Originality includes the scientific study of possible solutions in advertising communication, using associative connotations of color images. Color harmony in advertising is interpreted as a dynamic balance of contrasting elements of the visual info media. As an alternative to globalization processes with an aspiration to standardization and assimilation of cultural peculiarities, the process of a nation's self-identification is actualized in posters. The functions of color in advertisements are here considered, e.g., expressive, physiological, emotional, informative, and aesthetic. The study on color in Advertising Design in a vast cultural context pays special attention to art-aesthetic aspects. The authors conclude that the use of visual means in advertising is orientated to a target audience with aesthetic ideals and national colors*

from Italy, Switzerland, and Ukraine. The practical value of the obtained results lies in the application of this complex approach to color designing posters.

**Keywords:** color semantics, visual aesthetics, advertising poster, media, cultural context.

Доктор мистецтвознавства, доктор наук габіліт. у галузі дизайну, професор Прищенко С.В.; доктор філософії у галузі дизайну, доцент Сенчук Т.В., Культурно-естетична компонента кольору у рекламному дизайні / Державний університет інфраструктури та технологій, Україна, м. Київ

Дослідження культурно-естетичної складової кольору у рекламному дизайні спрямоване на систематизацію візуальних засобів та визначення їх комплексних функціональних особливостей у комунікаційному просторі. Проблемами реклами є візуалізація, стилістика, тенденції розвитку. Оригінальність включає наукове вивчення можливих рішень у рекламній комунікації з використанням асоціативних конотацій кольорових образів. Колірна гармонія в рекламі трактується як динамічний баланс контрастних елементів візуальної інформації. Як альтернатива глобалізаційним процесам із прагненням до стандартизації та засвоєння культурних особливостей, у плакатах актуалізується процес самоідентифікації нації. Тут розглядаються функції кольору в рекламі, наприклад, експресивна, фізіологічна, емоційна, інформативна та естетична. Вивчення кольору в рекламному дизайні в широкому культурному контексті приділяє особливу увагу художньо-естетичним аспектам. Автори роблять висновок, що використання візуальних засобів у рекламі орієнтоване на цільову аудиторію з естетичними ідеалами та національним колоритом Італії, Швейцарії та України. Практична

*цінність отриманих результатів полягає у застосуванні комплексного підходу до проектування плакатів в кольорі.*

*Ключові слова: семантика кольору, візуальна естетика, рекламний плакат, медіа, культурний контекст.*

**Introduction.** Since ancient times color has been a symbol, decor, and a means of information. The colors of nature are inexhaustible sources of inspiration for artists and designers. Color is always and everywhere a manifestation, an expression of a certain idea, however, not a measure of quantity or form, but the quality of the property without which it is impossible to imagine human intelligence. The colors of culture are created by Man, and visual culture, in turn, creates Man (Serov, 2004).

The study of the topic can take place at the cultural, methodological, methodical, or practical level. In this case, we focused on the practical application of national colors in the poster. The relevance is due to the importance of color graphics in the fields of commerce, industry, culture of many countries, and intensification of visual researches. A poster actively broadcasts the social, cultural, historical development of society, becomes a picturesque chronicle and a reflection of life. Our analyses of cultural-aesthetic component of color in advertising (Ad) has the aim to systematize visual means of information and make a complex definition of their functional and visual specifics in communication space of modern society, which is much wider than fifty years ago. At the beginning of XXI cent. great changes happened in conception of Design and Advertising because of the globalization processes and simultaneous ethno-cultural identification.

Color in many varieties of Art, Design and Advertising performs important aesthetic, formative, informative tasks. The genesis of color in advertising as the form of socio-cultural communication determined by several factors: first – a pragmatic, depending on the existing inventory of

economic relations, development of media and specific commercial objectives; second – a cultural, depending on the socio-cultural realities of society forms and psychological aspects of national mental groups. And third factor – aesthetic, depending on the ideological platforms and art-historical processes of development, affecting the transformation of social structures, spiritual and material culture, and on the formation of art styles. So, color always needs the certain context (Pryshchenko, 2018, p. 43).

The content of modern Ukrainian publications indicates not enough level of scientific research of art-aesthetic aspects of advertising design. The humanities and art criticism scientists don't disclose the influence of Art on ads and formation of its stylistics, – the scientific works have describing character and don't give the idea of the appropriateness of the color development of advertising products. But some American, Canadian and European authors studied the color forms in advertising graphics (Barnard, 2005; Bovee & Arens, 1989; Colour Design, 2017; Droste, 2006; Heller, 1995; Singh, 2006; Thiessen, 2017; Traindl, 2009). Ana Craciunescu believes that semiotic decoding of advertising signs is necessary, since advertising is an images containing preexisting and reproduced visual symbols (Craciunescu, 2021).

The theoretical fundamentals for color research are scientific publication (Biggam, 2012) and advertising design research are publications (Advertising and Art, 2007; Flath & Klein, 2014; Meggs, 2006; Mueller-Brockmann, 2004; Weill, 2004). Anatol Wowk examines the national palette, noting that the color designations in the Ukrainian language have a very wide range, and in particular, the pair “blue-yellow” in the Ukrainian flag has the following color interpretations: light blue, greenish-blue, navy blue, azure, strong blue – and springy, spring orange-yellow, golden-yellow, warm yellow, yellow chrome. Therefore, even at the level of use in the design and advertising of the pair “blue-yellow” quite

significant variations of shades are possible (Wowk, 1986, 87). Moni Almalech deal a visual-verbal code of advertising communications. Advertising becomes a sign that sells not a product itself but its symbolic reflection. He emphasizes that the semiotics of color combines visual and verbal aspects that are very important in advertising – natural prototypes, universal meanings, associative characteristics, ethno-cultural features, and manipulative strategies to influence the consumers (Almalech, 2011). Despite the fact that the output of products and services beyond national borders in the form of a poster requires consideration of the factors of internationalization, today they are directly dependent on the imagery of advertising and national coloristics.

**Methodology.** The authors` vision of the problem is that advertising is trans system, integrative character, and the complex approach has proven to be the most appropriate for understanding the nature of advertising communications. The methodology is based on socio-cultural, axiological, and comparative methods to the analysis of visual language of color in Ad. The socio-cultural method made it possible to interpret color graphics as a reflection of the historical, cultural, economic, technological and political stages of society. Applying the axiological method, color considered as a derivative product of culture, due to a set of needs, values and norms of a particular historical period. The comparative method provided a comparison of the advertising environment in historical dynamics.

**Article's objective.** This research on the cultural-aesthetic component of color in advertising aims at systematizing visual means and defining their complex functional features in the communication space. Objective – color as a national resource in Ad on the example of Italian, Swiss and Ukrainian posters.

**Main materials.** There are three levels of color perception: 1. Sensing color can be understood as the simplest understanding of physiology; 2.

Perception is a more complex process due to a number of laws of psychological nature; 3. Sense of color belongs to the emotional-aesthetic sphere. Visual perception is closely related to the semantics of color – not only cultural but also psychophysiological, because during perception there is a combination of visual reaction and thinking, there is a process of judgments and thoughts. Different levels of significance with the use of color symbols and connotations affect semiological understanding in the construction of self-identification through objects or images. Jean-Philip Lenclos analyzes the world's dominant colors according to his own concept of “color geography”, explores the palettes of different habitats and proves how climate, geology, lighting, socio-cultural features and ethno-art traditions uniquely affect the applied aspects of color, its aesthetics (Lenclos, 2004).

In spite of its main commercial function, advertising was recognized as cultural phenomenon due to visual aids of advertising communication that become logical reflection of socio-cultural state of society in definite periods. Unfortunately, in most cases modern means of ad information don't contribute to forming outlook, art thinking development, aesthetic perception of reality etc. that visual aids are not end in itself: form, space and visual interrelation become means of visualization of ideas. On the base of critical visual analysis of modern ads, we can clearly separate two main tendencies of visualization: first – ideological orientation of middle class consumers to “life in luxury style” and international stylistics, second – orientation towards mass consumer, catching attention, exclusive brightness and diversity of colors in advertisements, ethno-motives also. Communicative, semiotic and cultural-aesthetic aspects of advertising define the bar and core of Ad appeal is axiological complex, with the help of which advertising can touch the individual values and aspirations of consumers. This complex becomes a basis for other elements of Ad world. It is necessary to add that modern

advertising forms trends of the definite style of life, social behavior, principles of use and moral norms.

Visual aids of advertising changed greatly – modern appearance of advertising appeals differs much from advertising of XIX cent. by graphic means and methods of psychological influence on consumers. In XX cent. a new stage of advertising activity has begun – advertisers have realized the need to predict the effectiveness of their appeals. The first psychological scientific studies on the perception of information and experiments to generalize the reaction of consumers to color ads appeared. Plamen Shulikov notes that at the beginning XX cent. there were sharp contradictions between the concepts of “art” and “industry”, mass production of consumer goods already then resulted in their low aesthetic level (Shulikov, 2011, p. 58). However, as in previous centuries, advertising appeals resembled works of art – engraving, story picture, miniature. Our generalization and classification of empirical ads materials of the end XIX – beginning of XXI cent. allows coming to the conclusion that advertising borrows style features of graphic arts and art crafts.

Advertising evolved from illustrative accompanying of commercial information to appearance of new to the appearance of new styles (or pseudo-styles) in frames of mass culture. In this context a lot of mistakes in advertising graphics were exposed: prevalence of stereotypes, primitivism, vulgarity and the absence of national imagery of major countries. Nowadays in the advertising space are dominated pop art, kitsch, eclecticism. In spite of main task of advertising – attracting attention of potential clients to one of many products, as a rule, similar products and create its positive image for long term memorizing, means of visualization mostly have low aesthetic level. Considerable commercialization went through, though, influenced the state and character of mass culture. As a result of huge economic and State building difficulties at the end of 1980–90s of the last century Ukraine

lost control over the production of own mass cultural product and its spread, giving it to foreign, especially to American and Russian producers. But advertising products for mass consumers must have aesthetic level and implement cultural-education function. Arman Dyane considered that base influence of advertising is that converts product into drug analogue, as it injects stupefy due to which purchasing of the product immediately gives the feeling of facilitation to consumer, bordering to euphoria, and, enslaves him for a long time. If Ad announcement is optimal by sense and form, it should raise as delight as anxiety simultaneously, create anguish presentiment pleasure and desire to get it in any way (Dyane, 2004).

To our mind, the main problem of advertising creativity is finding balance between commerce and aesthetics. Advertising philosophy is directed to getting profits, which is understood as the most important part of advertising process. But culturological, outlooking and moral-psychological parts are also of great importance. Especially the above mentioned parts of Ad process make a base of platform of visualization ideas. Nowadays, orientation of production to regional groups of consumers, significant change of market policy presupposed cardinal change in tasks and character of advertising: socio-psychological, cultural and aesthetical indices become very actual. Definition of color imagery as specific means of creating image from the point of view of definite aesthetic ideal is a key to understanding the process of projecting mythological image in Advertising design. Many consumers need not advertised goods but their images, symbols of prestige, possibility as means to follow definite style of life. Model of behavior due to social fashion and outcome style of life is a reflection of definite outlook, system of values, hierarchy of inner aims formed in their mind.

Florian Yuriev, selectively considering the color symbolism of different times and peoples, believes that all symbolic systems, without exception,

contain semiotic signs of broad generalized meaning, which were used by philosophers, theologians, scientists, and artists. For any language, the main ones are semantic units that are similar to the characteristics of the object or concept, and in a particular situation acquire cognitive (cognitive) values, the value of which is determined from the standpoint of national color culture. As a color metaphor, associative-code meanings have expressive significance not only in painting, but also in the art of visual information. From the point of view of semiotics, color performs three functions: communicative, cognitive and expressive. At the stage of representation in the process of perception with the help of color, communicative stages take place: distinction, distribution, separation, and unification of visual elements. At the stage of color-coding objects of reality or concepts, a cognitive function is performed. And already at the stage of emotional expression of feelings and aesthetic evaluation, the expressive functions of color are performed. In a real information situation, there are always nuances of color preferences that have a very subtle effect on the art imagery (Yuriev, 2007, pp. 32–33).

Color perception in advertising has strong psycho-emotional, associative and semantic principles, which are based on physiological, archetypal, art-historical, and cultural levels. In the era of “emotional shopping”, color is becoming a powerful psychological tool to influence the consumer. The design features of advertising must be considered in the design process. Hierarchically, it looks like this: at the first, emotional level, the main thing is the expressive function (which is the last in Yuriev, with which we can't agree), at the stage of attracting attention, psycho-physiological – at the stage of perception of objects and generalization of forms to simple geometric figures, emotional – at the stage of perception of straight and curved silhouettes in tone and color. At the second level of logical analysis, the informative function is added – at the stage of formation

of consumer interests, and aesthetic function – at the stage of readiness to purchase purchases. Image advertising is becoming increasingly important, which, in contrast to the narrow approach as a one-way appeal, campaigning for specific goods or services. A broad approach is aimed at any appeal of the manufacturer or seller to the national colors of the target audience (Pryshchenko, 2018). Based on the comparative analysis of advertising images in the different times, we have identified the four chronological stages in the choice of color as a style element and national resource in Italian, Swiss and Ukrainian posters. We distinguish four stages.

1. A figurative stage was the most prolonged, purely, advertising than didn't differ much from the works of Fine Art: realism, classicism, and ethno-stylistics in the XVIII–XIX cent. In the given examples we clearly see folk costumes that are organically entered into advertising themes.

2. A formal stage, one founded on the use of Avant-garde means, mainly the simple and contrast color combinations of functionalism from Bauhaus style in European countries, and Ukrainian constructivism, suprematism with ethno-stylistics in the I half of the XX cent. These examples already have signs of national colors as visual identifiers of countries.

3. A synthetic stage combined various color means of previous stages. Postmodernism captures all spheres: eclecticism, fragmentation and strategic instability, ethno-stylistics, the complexity of images, its deconstruction in the II half – the end of XX cent. We can see a rather bold use of the colors of Italian and Swiss flags, but for poster the artist chose the traditional colors for Ukrainian embroidery – black, red and white.

4. An imagery-associative stage, in which the art image, emotionality and originality of the chosen visual means are put forward. The rise of postmodernism, and conceptual search for new styles, returning ethno-style

(neo-folk), functionalism and minimalism, pin-up, leading polystylism. Color becomes a significant visual channel for communication, flat colors and shapes, the decor is absent, 3D images, big possibilities of computer effects in early of the XXI cent. These four posters vividly demonstrate the dominance of national colors in Ad. Nowadays take into account the specifics of regional cultures and their inherent graphic and color means of expression. Archetypal images in ads often imitate folklore motifs, themes, ideas, and characters.

One of the directions of design research is examining the influence of ethno-art and, especially coloristic traditions on modern project culture. Balance of national and international in design activity and advertising communications are actual and not homogeneous. Target audience research from the point of view of mentality has very big prognosis force in ads, because psycho-emotion peculiarities are already stable indices and widespread to great amount of population. Every country has its own cultural traditions, lack of respect ruins the strategy of a firm.

During XX cent. definitions of international sense of design dominated in society, so, the most interesting design form-creating inventions in the era of industrial production were international. But now, when manufacturers orient on small output products, it becomes possible to demarcate the national stylistics. Unfortunately, projects at the end of XX cent. – beginning of XXI cent. contained mechanistic borrowings of rural art motives and putting them on out national objects of printed and outdoor advertising, packing, souvenirs, web banners. Negative phenomenon of pseudo-nationalization was formed and consolidated at that time (e.g., pseudo-Ukrainian, pseudo-Russian, pseudo-Japanese, pseudo-Eastern styles). Though, the use of ethno-motives in advertising graphics should not be the “decoration” of advertising products, but it should be looking for new national forms of ads, saving regional cultural values in modern life,

because accelerated speed of globalization brings world to obliteration of borders (Pryshchenko, 2012).

In conditions of socio-cultural dynamics, we can observe “washing out” of stylistic trends or, even their absence that is generally defined by term “postmodernism” as presence of typical eclectics in postindustrial society and variety of artistic research in the second part of XX cent. It should be pointed out that borders of art and arrogance are washed out now more than in other time, so, the most problematic question is on stylistic features, aesthetic parameters, criteria of contemporary art and advertising products assessment. Postmodernism has its own typological features: the use of any ready forms from art to utility, widespread of photography and computer special effects, deliberate violation of commensurable quantities of visual elements, borrowing the ideas from other types of art, remake, interpretation, combination, fragmentation, epatage, installation, collageness and circulation (Byars, 1994; Heller, 2000). Now the frames of postmodernism are widening; forming of new stylistic trends in Architecture, Art, Design and Advertising are made by deliberate synthetic approach in the use of variable elements, wide spread of irony and giving new context to old forms, complexity of the sense of harmony, increasing the variety of genres, reinterpretation of ethno-art traditions, accepting the coexistence of different cultures and dialogue of cultures.

The Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022 inspired international cooperation among students and professionals in the field of poster art under the slogan “Stand with Ukraine!” on Facebook. The “blue-yellow” explosion as marking of Ukrainian territory and requirement for its integrity, as coding the meaning of national identity and high moral standards of Ukrainian society, demonstrated different creative approaches, different styles, but the only means – color as resource of the Nation. It should be noted that the Russian aggression against Ukraine has intensified the consciousness of

Ukrainians around the world and creativity in the use of national colors not only in posters but also in super graphics, ikebana, drawings, memes, installations in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Czech Republic, Montenegro, Romania, France, Turkey, Canada, and the United States. The vocation of posters to express the feelings of society is a special topic “Power of the Poster”. The poster is a powerful “weapon”, a powerful tool for visualizing socially significant ideas (Fig. 1).



*Fig. 1 – #StandWithUkraine, pictures from page by S.Pryshchenko “ECO-culture club”. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/ECO-culture-club-109900551139700>*

In this paper, we discussed about the advertising industry are not from the standpoint of Economics, Marketing or Management, but in terms of its artistic level of the posters. The comparative analysis of the forming factors in advertising is found that the visual range are not perform illustratively and decorative function, but is formed as the cumulative visual-verbal model, and language of which relies on the methods and means of Arts in the postmodern period. The functions of color in advertisements as the gradual perception are considered: expressive, physiological, emotional, informative, and aesthetic (Pryshchenko, 2018, p. 262).

**Conclusion.** In summary, it should be emphasized that researching the visual language of color in advertising communications in a wide context, paying special attention to art-aesthetic problems we come to conclusion that advertising is experiencing positive and negative impacts of

socio-cultural transformations. The use of color as visual mean in advertising graphics must be stipulated by orientation to target audience taking into consideration definite the aesthetic ideals, national coloristics, and ethno-art traditions. Color images as products of creativity in advertising have social meaning only in the systemic understanding of cultural processes. It is shown that media evolved from a simple illustrative accompaniment of commercial information to the borrowing of new art styles. So, the visual-verbal content of advertisements should be submitted in the unity of emotional and rational components, in determined cultural and communicative contexts, in associative relations also. The functions of color in advertisements are here considered, e.g., expressive, physiological, emotional, informative, and aesthetic. Color contributes to the national identification and image creation of countries, producers, goods, and services. The practical value of the obtained results lies in the application of this complex approach to color designing posters. **The prospects for further research** are to deepen the proposed provisions, which may serve as a basis for the development of Advertising Design Theory in Ukraine.

**References:**

1. Advertising and Art. (2007) *International graphics from the affiche to pop art*. Skira.
2. Almalech, M. (2011) *The Color semiotics*. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference “Language and Color.” Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, pp. 223–240.
3. Barnard, M. (2005) *Graphic Design as Communication*. Routledge Press.
4. Biggam, C. (2012) *The Semantics of Color. A Historical Approach*. Cambridge University Press.
5. Bovee, C., Arens, W. (1989) *Contemporary Advertising*. Irwin.

6. Byars, M. (1994) Postmodernism. In book: *The Design Encyclopedia*. J.Wiley & Sons, pp. 447–448.
7. Colour Design. (2017) *Theories and Applications*, ed. J.Best. Woodhead Publishing.
8. Craciunescu, A. (2021) Archetypal Aspects of Visual Intertextuality in Digital Advertising. *Journal of Media Research*, Vol. 14, Issue 2 (40), pp. 123–132.
9. Dyane, A. (2004) *Reklama [Advertising]*. Neva [in Russian].
10. Droste, M. (2006) *Bauhaus. 1919–1933*. Taschen.
11. Flath, B., Klein, E. (2014) *Advertising and Design. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Cultural field*. Bielefeld University.
12. Heller, E. (1995) *Wie Farben wirken: Farbpsychologie, Farbsymbolik, kreative Farbgestaltung*. Rowohlt.
13. Heller, S. (2000) Postmodernism. In book: *Graphic Style: from Victorian to Digital*. H.Abrams Publisher, pp. 230–233.
14. Lenclos, J.-P., Lenclos, D. (2004) *Colors of the World*. W.Norton & Company.
15. Meggs, P. (2006) *History of Graphic Design*. 5 ed. Wiley.
16. Mueller-Brockmann, J. (2004) *History of the Poster*. Phaidon Press.
17. Pryshchenko, S. (2012) *Natsionalnyi styl` i psevd-nationalizatsiya v dizajne i reklame [National style and pseudo-nationalization in Design and Advertising]*. Academy of Color. Author` resource. Retrieved from [https://koloristika.in.ua/t\\_nkd.php](https://koloristika.in.ua/t_nkd.php) [in Ukrainian]. (2022, June, 05).
18. Pryshchenko, S. (2018) *Khudozhno-obrazna systema reklamnoi grafiky [Art-imagery system of Advertising Graphics]*. National Academy of Culture and Arts Management, pp. 254–262 [in Ukrainian].
19. Serov, N. (2004) *Tsvet Kul`tury [The Color of Culture]*. Rech [in Russian].

20. Shulikov, P. (2011) *Art and Advertising. Industrial canon and cultural branding*. Slovesnost.
21. Singh, S. (2006) Impact of Color on Marketing. *Management Decision*, No 44 (6), pp. 783–789,  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740610673332>
22. Thiessen, J. (2017) *An Advertising History*. Retrieved from <http://activehistory.ca/2017/10/canada150-advertising-history> (2022, June, 05).
23. Traindl, A. (2009) *Neuromarketing: the visualization of emotions*. Alpina Publishers.
24. Weill, A. (2004) *Graphics: A Century of Poster and Advertising Design (New Horizons)*. Thames & Hudson.
25. Wowk, A. (1986) *English-Ukrainian Dictionary of color names and color science*. New York–Paris–Sydney–Toronto, pp. 87–89.
26. Yuriev, F. (2007) *Color imagery of information [Tsvetovaya obraznost` informatsii]*. Novyi Druk [in Russian].

Citation: Svitlana Pryshchenko, Tetyana Senchuk (2022). CULTURAL-AESTHETIC COMPONENT OF COLOR IN ADVERTISING DESIGN. Frankfurt. TK Meganom LLC. Paradigm of knowledge. 1(51). doi: 10.26886/2520-7474.1(51)2022.1

---

Copyright Svitlana Pryshchenko, Tetyana Senchuk ©. 2022. This is an openaccess article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) or licensor are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.