

Color Communicates – So Use it Wisely

A Book Review of *Pantone's Guide to Communicating With Color* By Leatrice Eiseman
Grafix Press, Ltd. \$35.00

If you are at all involved in producing marketing communication pieces such as brochures, ads, press kits, packaging, billboards or websites this book will be a great addition to your marketing library. As a marketing instructor and consultant I've been looking for the definitive book on how color communicates and hadn't been able to find one until now. I perused *The Luscher Color Test* translated by Ian Scott from the original German text by Dr. Max Luscher written in 1948, but I kept thinking there had to be something written that was more recent. I've also bought Chronicle Books' *Designer's Guide to Color* but it really didn't give much explanation on the use and meaning of color.

Ms. Eiseman, known as the "color guru" is the executive director of the Pantone Color Institute. She has successfully integrated psychology, design and business into developing meaningful information that has helped some of the top companies in the country achieve success through the use of color. She has done extensive research on the emotional impact of color, consumer responses to color and on color trends.

The Impact of Color in the Marketplace

Color is the most instantaneous method of conveying messages and meanings. It stimulates and works synergistically with all of the senses, symbolizes abstract concepts and thoughts, expresses fantasy or wish fulfillment, recalls another time or place and produces an emotional response. Color must immediately attract the consumer's eye, convey the message of what the product is all about, create a brand identity, and most importantly, help to make the sale. At the very least it must create enough interest to induce the would-be buyer to find out more about the product or service.

As an example of color's power in marketing think of a consumer walking briskly through the grocery aisles. Their eyes rest on a package for approximately .03 seconds before they move on. In that blink of an eye, the package must rivet their eyes, inform them of the package contents and, more importantly, appeal to their psyches. With literally thousands of products vying for the buyer's attention, the clever use of color can make or break a product line.

Filled with luscious examples of colorful ads and packaging the book also includes *color factoids*, little known tidbits of information on color. For example, "With an aging population, there will be as many old people as young people – living longer healthier lives. Beyond the age of 65, there is a yellowing of the lens of the eye called the Ginger-Ale Effect, making it more difficult to discern difference in cool colors. This does not mean that all products aimed at seniors should be warm-based, but it does mean that cool colors will have to be brightened or clarified so that contrasts are more evident between cool colors."

There are also entire sections on each of the colors in the spectrum with extensive definitions on that color's meaning. Following are some of the color descriptions:

Bright Red: Exciting, Energizing, Sexy, Hot, Dynamic, Stimulating, Provocative, Dramatic, Aggressive, Powerful

Burgundy: Rich, Elegant, Refined, Tasty, Expensive, Mature

Earth Brown: Rooted, Wholesome, Sheltering, Masculine, Woodsy, Warm, Durable, Secure, Rustic, Earth

Purple: Mystical, Spiritual, Futuristic, Fantasy, Meditative

Bright Blue: Electric, Energetic, Vibrant, Stirring, Happy, Dramatic

Navy: Credible, Authoritative, Basic, Classic, Conservative, Strong, Dependable, Traditional, Confident, Professional, Serene, Quiet

Charcoal Gray: Professional, Classic, Expensive, Sophisticated. Solid, Enduring, Mature

Black: Powerful, Elegant, Mysterious, Heavy, Basic, Bold, Classic, Strong, Expensive, Magical, Prestigious, Sober

Green: Nature, Trustworthy, Refreshing, Cool, Restful, Stately, Quiet, Traditional, Money

The book offers dozens more color descriptions and wonderful examples of winning color combinations. See what your company's logo colors are communicating. My company's logo colors are red and purple. Hmm, what does that say about me?

Valerie Camarda is the owner of Marketing Sense, a full service marketing communications and public relations firm with offices in San Francisco and Emeryville. Since her childhood she has always loved the colors purple and red.