

Color Management

HOW TO COLOR THE WAY CONSUMERS SEE YOUR BRAND

Marketers know better than anyone that brand and advertising colors are no accident. They base colors on a myriad of factors — psychology, aesthetics, or established best practices, and sometimes what the competitive landscape looks like.

Choosing and using color is as much an art as a science — those choices help brands stand out, fit in, reflect their personality and motivate consumers to buy. Colors are powerful, and critical for business success.

Equally important as choosing and using color is consistency across channels. Marketers can maintain uniform color throughout creative and production activities — if they take advantage of experienced professionals and resources along the way.

■ Color Matters — Get it Right From the Start

The first impression makes a big difference in consumer marketing. And color shapes that initial instinctive reaction more than any other factor.

- Consumers make up their minds about a product within 90 seconds¹
- 85% of that impression relies on color alone²
- 80% of brand recognition starts with color³

No two reds are created equal — a leading soda brand's red can is of course different from a national retailer's red logo. But what can't be different is how a single brand looks in various marketing channels, any of which could introduce a product.

While the soda can itself might be the exact right red, the way it looks in magazine ads or billboards, in digital assets or in-store displays — in every single channel, online and offline — has to be the same red.

■ Use Color to Cut Through the Clutter

With so many channels and competitors, marketing messages have to say more in less time today. Color opens the narrow window of opportunity wider.



The Question of Perception

As much as marketers can control creative and production, color is ultimately in the eye of the beholder. Four main factors affect how we see color — physiology, lighting, surrounding colors and surfaces. Everyone perceives color differently. Age, wellness, diet, mood and even gender all influence that perception.

- One in every 12 men is considered color blind, but only one woman in 255 is color vision deficient⁸
- Paper manufacturers use special optical brightening chemicals to make it white, since bleach weakens it
- Printers add different amounts of cyan, magenta yellow and black to that white paper base to get a spectrum of colors
- Natural sunlight is the best light to see the truest colors — indoors, 5000K lightbulbs are the same as natural light

Because of these kinds of factors, marketers need to be conscious of and attentive to color. Individuals see colors differently, so it's up to brands to eliminate any other potential for discord.



In print channels, color increases the time consumers spend reading materials by 80%.⁴ Color in print builds a basic understanding of the content by 80%.⁵ Most importantly, color in print promotions makes consumers 80% more likely to purchase.⁶

For digital, 42% of consumers judge a website solely on design, and 52% won't return if they don't like what they see.⁷ E-commerce can suffer if color clashes between images and design online, or if it's not on brand.

The color has to appear as marketers intend it to everywhere consumers look. Successful multichannel marketing programs take careful orchestration, regardless of size. Brands can control variables with knowledge, tools and close partnerships throughout execution and delivery.

Know where Color Can Go Wrong

Creative and production teams have to consider multiple factors for each channel or deliverable. There's no such thing as one true blue when it comes to color. It can get complicated — but even with the Pantone Matching System (PMS), marketers must be aware of these variables to actively control color.



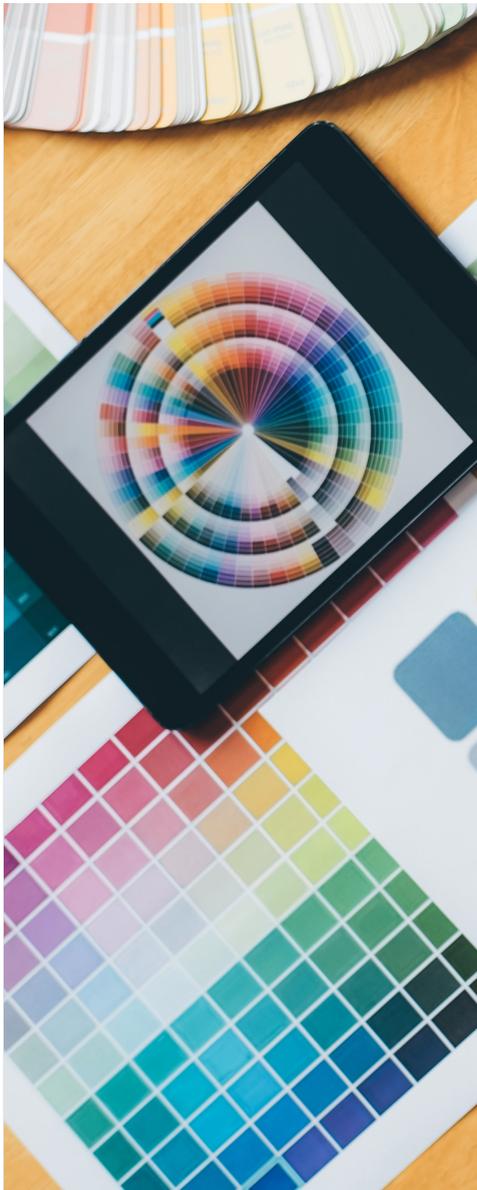
Photography. Lighting, camera equipment and the human element on set all influence what the color in the actual image will be. Then comes premedia and retouching, with different people deciding whether the color is correct. Brands need to make sure the creative process has continuity and clarity. And for editing, designers can calibrate monitors with display settings, hardware and system tests to account for another influential factor in the color equation.



Files. Since everything starts with a file, a mistake there can skew the creative downstream. File names might confuse, and the wrong color in an image has a ripple effect. Creative assets should be channel-agnostic, simple and useful everywhere — a foundation to build on. Uploading files to a central management hub controls versions and makes collaboration easy, so everyone knows what's happening in all media.



Substrate. Each material has a different finish, weight, brightness, opacity and shade — and colors look unique on each. Same goes for plastic, cardboard and all other print surfaces. There's no easy-button on press that matches the color on file to the substrate. That's where expertise in various print formats — how each surface absorbs ink — makes a noticeable difference in color for the final output.



Standardize Production for Consistent Color

Keeping everyone aligned to achieve consistency throughout creative and production is a big challenge. Partners can help keep things steady and stable on their end with these assurances for brands.

- Share software that facilitates harmony in production — features and capabilities stay constant no matter who works with the creative
- Use the same pool of resources and vendors so paper, ink, plates and other tools of the trade have a single origin
- Develop a common starting point with specs and guidelines for production to eliminate uncertainty and miscommunication
- Have a universal training program in place for all employees so they share best practices, procedures, techniques and knowledge

CONCLUSION

Managing color is not easy, but it is critical. Careful coordination to get marketing materials correct consistently in every channel makes a difference — a difference that improves brand perception and the bottom line. Marketers stay in control with essential knowledge, tools and experience.

Quad is a truly integrated marketing solutions partner. We take multichannel programs from concept through execution and delivery — with exceptional, reliable quality at every stage, in every channel.

To elevate your programs to exceptional, contact Quad today.

Research cited

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