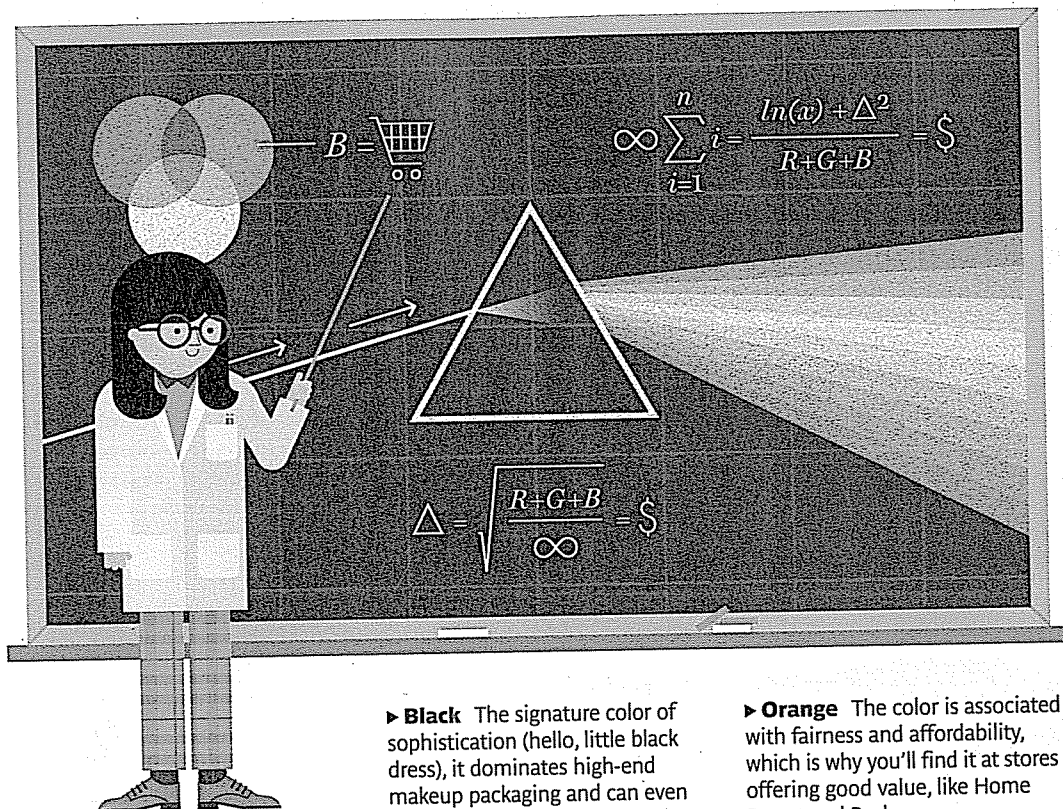


CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGIST

HOW COLOR AFFECTS YOUR SPENDING



At the mall, you'll spot nearly every shade of the rainbow on signs, labels, doors, shopping bags—you name it. But did you know that those colors may have been strategically placed to influence your spending? Marketing experts say that people subconsciously associate specific colors with specific social or cultural messages. Knowing this, retailers carefully select the colors they use in an effort to get you to loosen your purse strings. Here, experts explain how 10 different shades affect your purchasing habits.

► **Black** The signature color of sophistication (hello, little black dress), it dominates high-end makeup packaging and can even make inexpensive blushes and lipsticks seem more upscale.

► **Blue** Most everyone likes blue. No wonder it connotes trust and dependability and is a favorite logo color for financial institutions seeking to make people feel secure. Blue can improve customer loyalty, too: Patrons are 15 percent more likely to return to stores with blue color schemes than to those with orange color schemes, according to a 2003 study published in the *Journal of Business Research*.

► **Burgundy** This color reminds us of all things rich and refined (think red wine), so don't be surprised if the Merlot duvet cover you covet costs more than a white one in a similar style. Its prismatic cousin, brown, has similar connotations of luxury.

► **Green** Retailers often employ this color to attract eco-minded clients. But remember: Just because an item is green doesn't mean that it's environmentally friendly.

► **Orange** The color is associated with fairness and affordability, which is why you'll find it at stores offering good value, like Home Depot and Payless.

► **Pink** This sweet color—in particular, a shade close to bubble gum—has calming effects, according to research published in the *Journal of Orthomolecular Psychiatry*. Scientists found that seeing pink slows people's endocrine systems and tranquilizes tense muscles. How that might influence your wallet: Feeling relaxed may make it less painful to part with cash.

► **Red** Although plenty of shops embrace this color (and still find financial success), market experts warn that, just like a stop sign, a red placard can make consumers hit the brakes. It serves as an alarm, triggering a more careful consideration of our outlays.

► **Violet** Purple reigns in the beauty industry, especially in the category of anti-aging products. When people see it, they think of royalty. Consequently, a purple box may help persuade us that the product has special properties and is worth a princely sum.

► **White** In branding, white suggests simplicity and purity. (Seventy-five percent of top skin-care brands are packaged in white.) It also stands for modernity and honesty, which may be why Apple swears by it.

► **Yellow** A mainstay at fast-food restaurants, yellow evokes energy and increases appetite, perhaps explaining why your stomach may start to growl when you pass those golden arches.

—Yelena Moroz Alpert

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