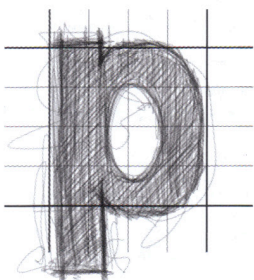


# Pick your palette wisely

Colour is one of the most powerful elements of packaging design. It can help to build a brand in a plethora of ways, writes **Gwen Blake**, managing director of Boxer & Co.



**PACKAGING DESIGNERS AND** brand managers use colour as a shorthand for their brand's attributes. Whilst words can portray more rational qualities like 'no artificial colours' or 'high in fibre', they are less powerful than an olive-green coloured pack which taps into the subconscious and forms part of a brand's toolkit, saying 'I'm natural, well-balanced and trustworthy'.

When used wisely, with an understanding of its psychology and how it reacts in the retail environment, colour can quickly position your brand in unique and ownable territory compared to its competitors, without taking up huge amounts of your valuable front-of-pack real estate.

Colour can have an astounding influence on the recognition of your brand. According to a study by The University of Loyola in Maryland USA, colour increases brand recognition by up to 80 per cent. It's a powerful trick that brand owners shouldn't miss and one that some companies consider so intrinsic to their success that they spend huge sums of money on trademarking certain colours within specific categories. The Cadbury – Darrell Lea 'purple' court case is a well documented example of this, as is the specific blue of a Tiffany's box.

Colour is the most robust way of creating shelf-blocking and therefore stand out in the retail environment. It's the easiest way a brand has of using its range of packaging to detract attention from counterpart products.

The examples in this article illustrate some colours, their perceived meanings and considerations and brands that are using these to their advantage.

## **RED – MEANS STRENGTH, ENERGY, WARMTH, DANGER, WAR, ADRENALINE**

A highly popular choice with brand-owners. International players Coca-Cola, Budweiser and KFC all use the strong, energetic cues that red conjures up. The problem with red is it's so over-done that it's hard to get differentiation in a lot of categories through the use of the colour. Pantone 485 has to be the most used colour in logos worldwide. The danger is that consumers are so used to seeing this colour on packaging that, unless used innovatively and in combination with other colours, it can say nothing more than 'me too'. Take heed!

## **ORANGE – MEANS ENERGY, DYNAMISM, FLAMBOYANCE, ATTENTION SEEKING**

The colour orange is so strongly associated with the flavour 'orange', that examples of its use as a brand colour are few and far between. Ovaltine uses the energetic qualities of the colour to good effect, and Uncle Ben's uses the colour to communicate creativity, innovation and speed.

## **YELLOW – MEANS SUN, CREATIVITY, JOY, HAPPINESS, OPTIMISM, ENERGY**

Bird's Eye uses the colour yellow to denote the sun's natural energy and Maggi uses the colour to denote happiness and optimism as well as creating one of the boldest examples of shelf-blocking seen in Australian supermarkets.

## **GREEN – MEANS BALANCE, WELL-BEING, ABUNDANCE, FRESHNESS**

A modern shorthand for 'environmentally aware', the colour green is used in almost every category. Aside from its environmental cues, it's used by OliveGrove, GreenSeas and Fructus to denote wellbeing, nature and freshness.

## **BLACK – MEANS FORMALITY, ELEGANCE, GOURMET, POWER, PREMIUM**

Gu, Always Fresh, Carman's and Ainsley Harriott all use black to portray power, strength of flavour and quality. The colour is used more widely in the United Kingdom, where supermarkets tend to be bigger and better lit. A fear amongst Australian brand-owners is that the colour is recessive on shelf. However, the progress made in the last few years in the Australian retail environment is slowly alleviating these fears, making it a much more viable option.

A packaging design or branding agency will consider a variety of colour tools including the psychologies of colours, the quality of reproduction, aesthetic qualities and suitability of use in their environment to arrive at the most appropriate colour or combination of colours to represent a brand.