

Color Cosmetics and Perception

Similar to the senses of taste and smell, color helps people understand the world around them. Color is a perception, the brain's response to data received by the visual systems. The color perception process combines instinctual behavior with learned attitudes, judgments or beliefs, which are often based on cultural traditions and personal experiences.

In 2005, researchers at the University of Rochester found direct evidence that the brain serves as an internal, automatic calibrator of color perception. Furthermore, since color is defined by a person's experience in a shared world, people often perceive specific shades similarly.¹

- Colors are associated with emotions or moods: red may be seen as exciting or passionate, while blue is peaceful and serene.
- They may also be associated with tradition, such as linking white to weddings. Within a split second, cultural, symbolic, experiential and instinctual information is processed in the brain, allowing people to make judgments about people, situations and environments.²

Perceived Beauty and the Psychology of Color³

Research shows that human beings have been using makeup for over 50,000 years. Neanderthals used yellow foundation-type pigments and red powders for ritual purposes. In the 4th century B.C., upper class Egyptian women applied scented oils and creams made from the fat of sheep and eye paint. Egyptians were the first to record their use of makeup in tomb paintings.

Throughout history, color cosmetics and hair dye have been used by people to alter the way others perceive them. In the Middle Ages, people lightened their skin with cosmetics as pale, white, pristine skin was seen as a sign of wealth. Using dyed pink makeup signified extreme wealth. In later years, color cosmetics were used to cover up signs of disease.

In the 19th century, the French were responsible for developing more advanced scientific processes for the creation of new cosmetics, with zinc oxide bases replacing more dangerous substances such as lead and copper, and for manufacturing perfumes, which were created from aromatic natural ingredients like flowers and fruits.

Recent research has also shown that cosmetics are perceived as tools of power that allow people to alter the way they are perceived. This feeling of control can improve self-esteem, happiness and well being. P&G Beauty & Grooming scientists are using these insights and the latest Color Science research to develop hair color, cosmetic and skin care products that allow women to express different aspects of their personalities, adapt to various roles and ultimately control how they are perceived.

¹ <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/10/051026082313.htm>

² <http://www.webexhibits.org/causesofcolor/mind.html>

³ Etcoff, N. Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty