

## Research: Red vs. blue

Mehta and Zhu studied the effects of the colours red and blue by having respondents execute a number of tasks, against the backdrop of red and blue backgrounds.

When solving an anagram with a red background, words relating to alertness, such as 'preventive', were found sooner, while a blue background resulted to be conducive to finding words like 'adventure', and words relating to creativity.

A memory test showed that a red background leads to more words being remembered and the most correct answers to questions. But respondents confronted with a blue background gave more creative answers to questions.

When respondents were asked to make a design using red or blue components, it turned out that the red components were mainly used for functional designs, with the blue ones predominantly used for original designs.

When asked to choose between brands, a red background led to respondents preferring brands that signal something, while a blue background led to them preferring brands that draw attention to a benefit. It also emerged that camera brands are better off using a red background in their ads when they want to stress product details. But when they want to stress associations with photography (such as on holiday), they would be better off going for an advert with a blue background.

Researchers finally checked whether respondents were aware of the influences of the different colours. This turned out not to be the case. Both for creative and detail-oriented backgrounds, respondents had a preference for the colour blue. This matches the general given that people prefer the colour blue, even though research has shown that red is the colour to use when you want to draw attention to something.

The question what colour is the most convincing to generate attention for a brand, product or service is best answered by stating that it all depends on the objective. When the objective is to alert people to something (such as getting them to remember important information), red is the colour to go for. But when the objective is to display creativity and imagination, this research would suggest blue as the most appropriate colour.

*Reference(s)*

Mehta, R., Zhu, R. (2009), Blue or red? Exploring the effect of color on cognitive task performances. *Scienceexpress*, 5 Feb 2009. \*

\*: available in the EURIB library.