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## The influence of colour perceptions on consumer brand personality in emerging African economies: Evidence from Mauritius

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to determine the influence of colours on consumer brand personality across four main constructs: sincerity, excitement, sophistication and ruggedness. The paper applies an exploratory approach data was collected from 155 people aged 18 and above in Mauritius and Levene's tests. Person Correlation tests were used to analyze the relationship between colours and the four main brand personality constructs. It was found that the colours black, red, green and brown were associated with sincerity, the colours yellow, red, orange and black were associated with excitement, the colours white, pink, red, orange black, purple, brown and green were paired with sophistication and the colours white, pink and orange were paired with ruggedness. This study serves as a blueprint for companies to utilize when drafting their branding strategies in Mauritius when it comes to colours and its interpretation among consumers.

**Keywords:** branding strategy, colours in marketing, brand personality, marketing strategy

### 1. Introduction

Colour psychology refers to the appropriate use of colours to convey a specific message that can trigger a reaction. Previous studies established that colours attract consumers, increase sales, help in product loyalty and have different meanings associated with them (Silburyte *et al.*, 2014) [25]. Brand perception refers to the process by which a consumer selects, organizes and interprets information about an entity to create a whole picture of the entity in his or her brain (Batra, 2016) [5]. Brand personality is defined as the human traits that consumers associate with a brand or product. Aaker (1997) [1] stated that brand personality influences consumer attitudes and can serve as the foundation for building long-lasting profitable relationships with consumers. The big five personality model used for this present study is: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness.

The main objective of this present study is to investigate whether colours influence brand personality perception amongst Mauritian consumers.

### 2. Review of literature

Colours create competitive advantage, increase sales, motivate impulse buying and create emotional attachment, to attract attention, disseminate information, provide expectations and depict the aesthetic experience of a product or brand (Babin *et al.*, 2003; Singh, 2006; Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2010; Page, 2012; Akcay, 2013; Kerckhove, 2014; Silburyte *et al.*, 2014) [4, 20, 18, 23, 3, 20, 24, 25]. Colours are also associated with different meanings and were found to change consumers' mood (Kaya, 2004; Singh, 2006; Chang, 2010; Labrecque, 2012; Akcay, 2013; Juwaheer & Sahye, 2019) [19, 24, 8, 21, 3, 16].

Brand personality, as defined by Aaker (1997) [1], is human traits that people associate with a brand. Five of the main brand personality models are sincerity, ruggedness, sophistication, competence and excitement which are displayed in Figure 1:

Colour preferences can be explained by using the associative learning theory such that consumers learn to prefer a particular colour for a product or brand based on their previous interactions with the brand or product (Grossman, 1999; Bottomley & Doyle, 2006) [15, 7]. Anthropomorphism is the theory that helps to explain how consumers can view brands as having a personality and how this can increase brand attachment and build relationship (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Freling & Forbes, 2010) [2, 13]. Animism is described as when a consumer thinks of a brand as having human traits (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998) [1, 12].

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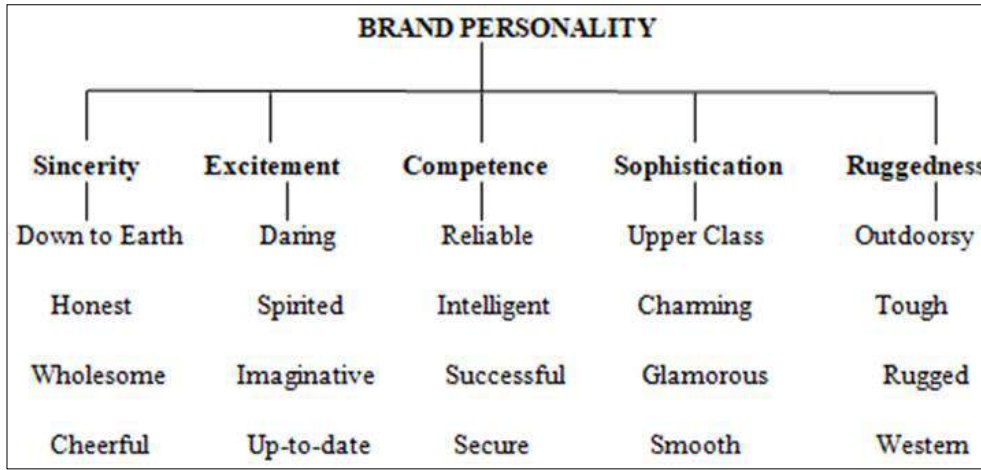


Fig 1: Aaker’s Brand Personality Dimensions Model

**2.1 Hypotheses**

- H<sub>1</sub>: There is an impact of white, yellow and pink hues on perceived sincerity of a brand.
- H<sub>2</sub>: There is an impact of red, orange and yellow hues on perceived excitement of a brand.
- H<sub>3</sub>: There is an impact of black, purple and pink hues on perceived sophistication of a brand.
- H<sub>4</sub>: There is an impact of brown and green hues on

perceived ruggedness of a brand.

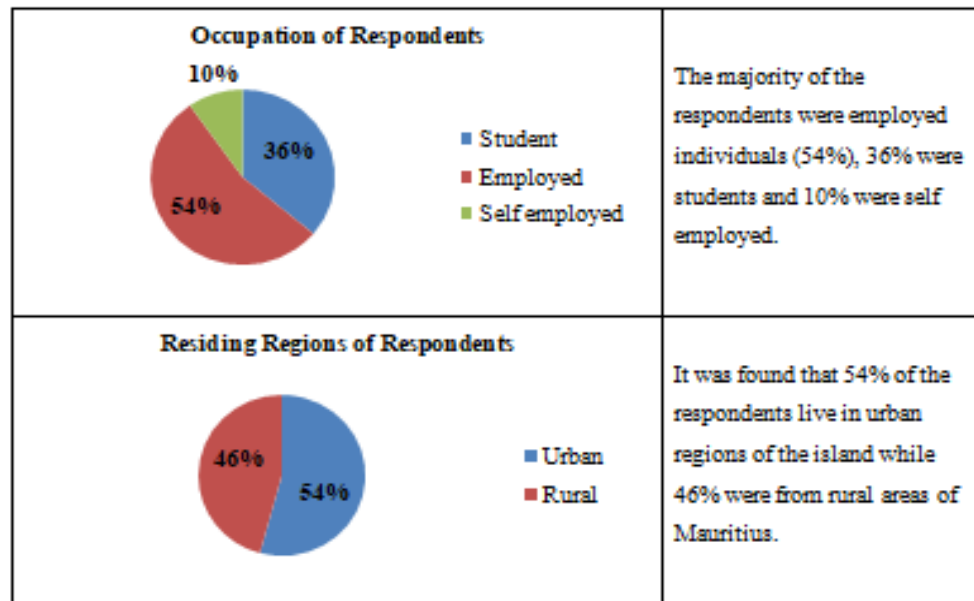
**3. Methods and results**

For the purpose of this study, primary data were collected via questionnaires with a sample size of 155 respondents using non-probability convenience sampling method.

**3.1 Demographics**

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Gender of Respondents</b></p>	<p>The respondents consisted of both males and females with 54% of the population being males, 41% being female and the rest preferred not to associate with a specific gender.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Age of Respondents</b></p>	<p>Most of the respondents were aged between 18 years old and 24 years old with 63.2%, people aged 25 years old to 34 years old made up of 27.7% of the sample size while 9% were respondents aged between 35 years old and 54 years old.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Education Level of Respondents</b></p>	<p>The bulk of the respondents have a degree education (72.9%) while school certificate and higher school certificate made up of 13.5% of the respondents sample each.</p>



### 3.2 Data Analysis

The findings of the first part of the questionnaire are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of findings

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Colours are important for a brand	9%	-	28%	27.1%	45.8%
Colours helps you to identify a brand easily	-	-	9%	36.1%	54.8%
The colour of a brand can change your mood	-	22.6%	27.1%	36.1%	14.2%
You are more loyal to a brand because of its colour	14.2%	18.1%	49.7%	13.5%	4.5%
Warmer colours (red, orange) attract your attention more easily than colder colours (green, purple)	14.2%	27.1%	27.1%	22.6%	9%
Colder colours (green, purple) attract your attention more easily than warmer colours (red, orange)	14.2%	27.1%	36.1%	13.5%	9%
The colour of a brand helps you recall a particular brand easier	9%	-	18.1%	36.1	36.8%
You associate different personalities to brands based on their colours	14.2%	18.1%	27.1%	22.6%	18.1%

### 3.3 Hypotheses testing

#### Hypothesis 1

**Table 3:** Colours impact on brand sincerity

Colours	M	F-Value	p-Value
White	2.77	3.60	.015
Yellow	2.86	3.46	.010
Pink	2.86	2.44	.049
Red	2.91	3.88	.005
Orange	2.86	3.28	.013
Black	2.86	3.67	.007
Purple	2.73	3.61	.015
Brown	2.82	28.79	.000
Green	2.95	8.45	.000

A higher positive relationship was observed among the colours brown ( $M = 2.82, p = .000 < .05$ ), green ( $M = 2.95, p = .000 < .05$ ), red ( $M = 2.91, p = 0.005 < 0.05$ ) and black ( $M = 2.86, p = .007 < 0.05$ ).

#### Hypothesis 2

**Table 4:** Colours impact on brand excitement

Colours	M	F-Value	p-Value
White	3.05	0.47	.627
Yellow	3.41	6.30	.000
Pink	3.18	3.32	.022
Red	3.77	3.92	.010
Orange	3.18	7.98	.000
Black	3.50	14.60	.000
Purple	3.27	1.83	.127
Brown	2.95	3.97	.009
Green	3.41	2.62	.053

A higher positive relationship was observed among the colours yellow ( $M = 3.41, p = .000 < .05$ ), red ( $M = 3.77, p = .010 < .05$ ), orange ( $M = 3.18, p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) and black ( $M = 3.50, p = .000 < 0.05$ ).

#### Hypothesis 3

**Table 5:** Colours impact on brand sophistication

Colours	M	F-Value	p-Value
White	3.74	25.0	.000
Yellow	2.77	10.19	.000
Pink	2.77	18.40	.000
Red	2.95	6.10	.000
Orange	2.68	8.98	.000
Black	3.78	5.01	.001
Purple	2.82	7.21	.000
Brown	2.73	6.70	.000
Green	2.82	3.68	.014

The more prominent colours include white ( $M = 3.74, p = .000 < .05$ ), yellow ( $M = 2.77, p = .000 < .05$ ), pink ( $M = 2.77, p = .000 < 0.05$ ), red ( $M = 2.95, p = .000 < 0.05$ ), orange ( $M = 2.68, p = .000 < 0.05$ ), black ( $M = 3.78, p = .001 < 0.05$ ), purple ( $M = 2.82, p = .000 < 0.05$ ), brown ( $M = 2.73, p = .000 < 0.05$ ) and green ( $M = 2.82, p = .014 < 0.05$ ).

#### Hypothesis 4

**Table 6:** Colours impact on brand ruggedness

Colours	M	R Value	p-Value
White	2.82	.337	.000
Yellow	2.87	.146	.070
Pink	2.55	.397	.000
Red	3.09	-0.072	.371
Orange	2.82	.256	.001
Black	3.23	-0.025	.757
Purple	2.91	.114	.158
Brown	2.95	.040	.620
Green	2.91	.134	.097

It was found that the colours white ( $M = 2.82, r = .337, p = .000 < 0.05$ ), pink ( $M = 2.55, r = .397, p = .000 < 0.05$ ) and orange ( $M = 2.82, r = .256, p = .001 < 0.05$ ) had more impact on brand ruggedness.

### 4. Discussions

It was found that colour is of great importance for brands as evidenced by 45.8% of the respondents who agreed on this statement. Colours also help to identify specific brands, change the mood of consumers, have a positive impact on consumer loyalty to a brand, helps in brand recall and in building brand personalities. It was also noted that consumers are attracted to warmer colours such as red and orange more. These findings are in line with the findings from Babin *et al.* (2003)<sup>[4]</sup>, Bottomley & Doyle (2006)<sup>[7]</sup>, Singh (2006)<sup>[24]</sup>, Kauppinen-Räsänen (2010)<sup>[18]</sup>, Page (2012)<sup>[23]</sup>, Akcay (2013)<sup>[3]</sup> and Juwaheer & Sahye (2019)<sup>[16]</sup>. This raises the need for marketers to understand and know their customers in order to come up with colours and parallel branding strategies that align with the beliefs of the target audience.

It was also found that brand sincerity personality is more successful when colours like brown, green, red and black are used. This differs from previous findings (Mahnke, 1996; Fraser & Banks, 2004; Clark & Costall, 2007; Chang, 2010; Labrecque, 2012; Akcay, 2013; Juwaheer & Sahye, 2019)<sup>[22, 11, 9, 3, 21, 8, 16]</sup> and reflects a change in Mauritians' attitudes towards colours and their associations. Hence, companies wanting to be seen as sincere by consumers need to make use of colours like brown, green, red and black in their branding communication. It was also discovered that the colours yellow, red and black were associated with this construct. This is only partially relevant to previous findings from Bellizzi *et al.* (1983)<sup>[6]</sup>, Crowley (1993)<sup>[10]</sup>, Mahnke (1996)<sup>[22]</sup>, Gorn *et al.* (1997)<sup>[14]</sup>, Clark & Costall (2007)<sup>[9]</sup>, Chang (2010)<sup>[8]</sup>, Labrecque (2012)<sup>[21]</sup>, Akcay (2013)<sup>[3]</sup> and

Juwaheer & Sahye (2019) [16].

The next personality trait that was investigated in this study was sophistication and it was found that the colours white, yellow, pink, red, orange, black, purple, brown and green contribute to this personality trait for brands. This is relevant to previous findings from Mahnke (1996) [22], Fraser & Banks (2004) [11], Clark & Costall (2007) [9], Chang (2010) [8], Labrecque (2012) [21], Akcay (2013) [3] and Juwaheer & Sahye (2019) [16]. Hence, companies who want to portray themselves as sophisticated should make use of the colours mentioned. The last personality trait that was analyzed was ruggedness and it was found that the colours white, pink and orange were the main colours to be associated with this personality. This differs from previous findings from Mahnke (1996) [22], Clark & Costall (2007) [9], Chang (2010) [8], Labrecque (2012) [21], Akcay (2013) [3] and Juwaheer & Sahye (2019) [16]. It is also interesting to note that the colour orange is associated with three personality traits, namely: excitement, sophistication and ruggedness. This can be linked to the fact that people are more attracted to warmer colours, as was found in the first part of this study. Overall, the findings show that colours do play a vital role in brand personality perceptions from consumers. Table 7 is a summary of the findings from the present study.

**Table 7:** Summary of inferential analyses findings

Personality Trait	Colours Associated
Sincerity	Brown, Green, Red, Black
Excitement	Yellow, Red, Orange, Black
Sophistication	White, Pink, Red, Orange, Black, Purple, Brown, Green
Ruggedness	White, Pink, Orange

**5. Conclusion**

The study did not account for the other factors which are also important when it comes to brand personality. Moreover, consumer perceptions on brands and colours vary from product to product and across different industries and this were also not investigated in this present study.

Future research can examine the other factors that were not accounted for and add colours to the mix to see if the same results are obtained. Moreover, men and women perceive brands and colours differently and this is an opportunity to investigate if brand personality on the basis of colours is different by gender. The sample of this study was Mauritians and this paves the way for other similar research to be carried across various cultures as colours are seen differently in different countries and cultures.

Colours are an innovative way to increase your brand’s visibility, retain consumers, have repeat purchases, influence the moods of your target audience and attract the attention of potential consumers. The present study also shows the changing tastes, attitudes and perceptions of consumers as the results differ from previous findings. Hence, continuous research and investigation is necessary to understand consumers and come up with more effective marketing and branding strategies.

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