

## Manifesting corporate brand image using colors

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### Abstract

Every business wants to be a customer's first choice. Building and managing a brand can play a significant part in making that happen. Customers and employees can build up emotional attachments to certain brands, allowing for strong loyalties and even a sense of ownership. In the commercial world, the most valuable brands are those able to build a strong emotional connection with the consumers. One way to build an emotional connection with customers is to stimulate their feelings and senses. Among all of the human senses, sight is the most powerful and affective sense. The first customers' impression of sight memory is within 0.67 seconds which comes from colors. Each color has its own traits and emotions. Though companies have to choose their brand colors in congruent with their visions and goals to make their proper brand image in consumers' minds. This study implements some library researches to explore brand image be influenced by color traits. The results reveal that color affects consumer perception for brand identity. Successfully using color to convey corporate image enhances consumer purchase behavior. This is because color traits affect emotions and positive consumer evaluation of corporate image.

**Keywords:** Color traits, Color theories, Branding, Brand image.

## Introduction

The immaterial and intangible elements of the product affect the consumers' buying decisions. Brand image is an intangible element that affects buying decisions. In these days, a product or a service is almost irrelevant without the brand. It cannot be identified or associated with what influences in fact the purchasing process. It is the overall effort of a brand identity what actually determines the success or failure; and a better understanding of it and its result, namely the brand image, is an important matter. In the commercial world, the most valuable brands are those able to build a strong emotional connection with the consumers. In certain ways, the brand would like to build the emotional attachment with the consumer as the best friends forever. The sensory marketing is the innovative solution to create the emotional characteristics of the brand/product and to provide it with solid position in market, as well as to secure strong relations with a consumer (Hultén, 2011; Funk et al., 2006; Kosslyn et al., 2003). Among all of the human senses, sight is the most powerful and affective sense. As the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle indicated that all perceptions are triggered by witness. The research of Linstorm (2005) also revealed that 83% of human beings use sight as the receiver to obtain messages among the five senses. The seven second color theory in marketing, proposed in the 1980s in Europe, indicates that consumers experience their first impression of sight memory for products within 0.67 seconds. The first impression dominates 67% of the purchasing process which comes from colors. A research from Loyola University (2007) in the US indicated that using colors to manifest critical messages enhances attention by 82% and brand recognition by 80%. Marketing practitioners have often turned to color consultants to help them determine product colors that appeal to consumers. Designers utilize color traits to enhance the sight memory of brands and improve the ability to identify brands (Perry et al., 2003). The wrong use of color traits may deliver wrong messages from an enterprise perspective. What are the universal relationships between colors and emotion? The main problems one can see here are cultural difference, personal difference, society etc. But there are colors that share common meaning among a lot of people. In this study some color theories are defined and gather together and manifesting brand image using colors has explored.

## Color primary concepts

### What is color

Light comes to earth from the sun in waves. Some of the waves are longer and others are shorter. Waves are seen as the colors of the rainbow. Each color has a different wavelength. Red has the longest wavelength while violet has the shortest one. When all the waves are seen together, they make white light. It is considered that white has no color, but it's not true. One way to see this, is to shine white light through water. When white light shines through water, it makes a rainbow. The water breaks apart the color of white so all the colors of the rainbow is seen. These colors are called the visible light spectrum.

### Primary, secondary and tertiary colors

Primary colors are the three colors that make all other colors. They are red, blue, and yellow. These three colors can be used to create the next level of colors, called the secondary colors. Secondary colors are purple, green, and orange. They are created using the primary colors. If you look on the color wheel, you'll find the secondary colors in between two primary colors. Tertiary colors take secondary colors one step further. They

are the "two-name" colors, such as red-purple, red-orange, yellow-green, etc. They are created by adding more of one primary color than the other (Fig.1).



Fig. 1: Primary, secondary and tertiary colors.

### Hue, Tints, Shades and Saturation

Primary, secondary, and tertiary colors, without the addition of white, black, or a third color, are pure (or saturated) colors. They are intense, bright, cheery, and untainted colors.

Hue refers to These pure colors. When white is added to a pure color, it is a tint. Some people refer to these as pastel colors. They are lighter and paler than a pure color, and not as intense.

When black is added to a pure color, a shade is created. These darken and dull the brightness of pure colors, and range from slightly darker to almost black. There is another concept as brightness that is the amount of white or black added to the pure color.

Saturation refers to the purity, or intensity of a color. When gray (black + white) is added to a pure color, a tone is created. People saying that a color needs to be toned down, meaning it's too intense and they want to drop the level of intensity. Adding black and white in different amounts to a color subdues the intensity quickly.

### Color theories

Researchers have suggested that color associations may have been formulated early in human history when he/she associated dark blue with night, and therefore, passivity and bright yellow with sunlight and arousal (Luscher and Scott, 1969). To this day, cool colors, such as blue and green, are considered calming and warm colors, such as red and orange, are considered arousing (Kreitler and Kreitler, 1972; Berlyne, 1960; Birren, 1978; Costigan, 1984; Davidoff, 1991). Some of color theories that represent human associations are then gathered in this study.

### Goethe's color theory

German writer and politician Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was a multi-talented individual. Goethe created his version of a color wheel and arranged the colors according to what he called their natural order. He also explored the impact of colors on emotions and attributed different qualities to certain colors. The color wheel starting in the area with red and working down to yellow, it can be seen the word schön, which means beautiful; edel, which means noble; gut, which means good; Nützlich, which means useful; Gemein, which means mean and common; and Unnöthig, which means unnecessary (Fig.2). Each word corresponds to a section on the wheel. In Goethe's theory, yellow as the color nearest to the light, was bright and exciting. It stood for good. red stood for gravity, dignity and attractiveness or beauty. Blue, on the other hand, was powerful, but in a slightly negative way creating a cold impression.

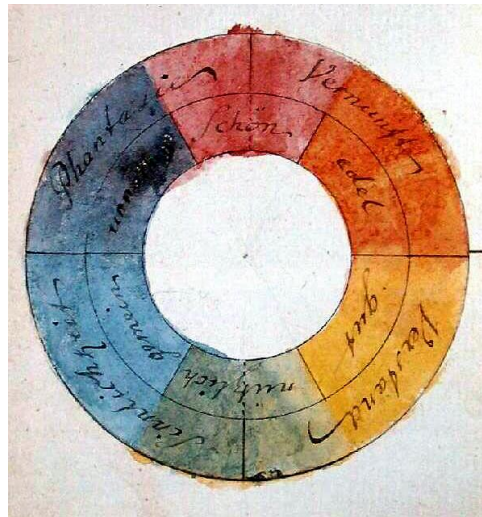


Fig. 2: Goethe's color wheel.

### Color psychology of Faber Birren

Faber Birren (1900-1988) was an early practitioner in the color industry producing 25 books and variety of articles. One of his books is: color psychology and color therapy that consists of 9 main sections, of which emotional response, biological response, historical background, and to heal the body. Birren states that the stimulation of red and other warm colors tends to increase blood pressure, pulse, respiration. (Birren, 1961). He shows that to physically and psychologically relax the body and mind, green and blue are effective. His statements about other colors are given (Table 1).

### The meaning of colors by Claudia Cortes

Research performed by Claudia Cortes delivers an extensive list of attributes of positive and negative traits. It goes further than only summing some emotions for the specific color, but also what is commonly associated with the color. This however makes it difficult to abstract the different colors into their most intense emotional meaning. Still it has greatly influenced the chosen emotion meanings and location onto the



special grid which is the main part of the model (Nijdam, 2009). The summary of his work is shown (Table 1).

### Color codification of emotions by Shirley Willett

Shirley Willett's finding act as the standard for the basic emotions and color relationship. Willets' model presented overlaps the data from Claudia Cortes' work but with slight changes from the list to the basics. it displays layers (Fig. 3); external layer as positive traits, the second layer has six emotions, the third layer as the negative traits and the central layer is the depression spot, which is the combination of all negative traits (Alkawaz et al., 2014).



Fig. 3: Shirley Willett's color codification.

The summary of these color theories has shown (Table 1):

Table. 1. Traits and emotions of colors (Chang and Lin, 2010).

color	trait	Color circle (Goethe)	Color Psychology (Birren, 1961)	Meaning of color (Claudia Cortes)	Color codification (Shirley Willett)
red	Positive trait	Seriousness, Dignity, Grace/Charm	Passion, Love, Heat	Active, Emotional	Enthusiasm
	Negative trait	X	Danger, Anger	Offensive, Embarrassed	Rage



	Emotion	Faith	Excitement, Energy	Anger, Love	Anger
Orange	Positive trait	Energetic, Warmth, Passive	Happiness, Enthusiasm	Ambition	Pride
	Negative trait	Irritating	Aggression, Arrogance	Tiring	Disgrace
	Emotion	Happiness, Powerful	Happiness, Energy	Joy, Determination	Shame
yellow	Positive trait	Purity, Pleasant	Joy, Happiness, optimism	Lively, Energetic	Awareness
	Negative trait	x	x	Cautious	Panic
	Emotion	Joy	Sunlight, Joy, Happiness, Optimism, Intelligence	Fear, Happiness/Joy	Fear
green	Positive trait	Calm, Neutral	Nature, Youth, Fertility	Calm, Neutral	Satisfaction
	Negative trait	x	Coldness, Jealousy	Greedy, Sick	Hoarding
	Emotion	Calm	Coldness, Nature	Faith, Greed	Greed
blue	Positive trait	Comfort	Peace, Calmness, Trust, Confidence	Faithful, Traditional	Clarity
	Negative trait	Void Cold	Coolness	Depressed	Racing
	Emotion	Sadness	Depression, Coldness, Calmness	Confident, Sadness	Confusion
purple	Positive trait	Active	Royalty, Creativity	Leadership, Passive	Leadership
	Negative trait	Restless	Mystery	Arrogant, Sorrow	Impotence

	Emotion	Discomfort	Flamboyance, Gaudiness, Mystery	Introspective, Melancholic	Power
black	Positive trait	x	Modernity, Power, Elegance	x	x
	Negative trait	x	Fear, Anger, Sadness, Remorse	x	x
	Emotion	x	Power, Style, Elegance	x	x
white	Positive trait	x	Purity, Peace, Innocence, Cleanliness	x	x
	Negative trait	x	Humility Sterility	x	x
	Emotion	x	Innocence, Cleanliness, Simplicity	x	x

## Branding

The concept of brand is a well known but confusing concept. To define that, we use the definition presented by AMA (American Marketing Association). Name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors. Brands are what the entity wants its target customer to think and feel about their products or service (Heaver, 2000). A brand is not necessarily a product; but it is the product's essence, its meaning and direction, and it defines its identity in time and space. Too often brands are examined through their component parts: the brand name, its logo, design or packaging, advertising or sponsorship, or image or name recognition (Mindrut et al., 2015). Brand has different elements but in this study we concentrated the specific color term of visual elements.

## Brand image

Brand image is the impression in the consumers' mind of a brand's total personality (real and imaginary qualities and shortcomings). Brand identity is how a company is being identified. Aaker (1995) considered that a strong brand needs an abundant and clear brand identity. Basically, brand identity represents the external image that the organization intends to present. Brand identity is determined by the perception of a receiver (Faraji and Ganjavi, 2009). Good brand identity transmits appropriate brand essentials to form a superior brand image (Chang and Lin, 2010). It will be transformed in one or more of the following components in order to result the desired brand image: logo, apparel, signage, stationery, marketing

collateral, messages and actions, products and packaging, emotions and other components (Mindrut et al., 2015).

### The relation between color and brand image

Schmitt (1997) specified brand identity to include the visual factor (e.g., color, type, line, and form), the hearing factor (e.g., volume), the touching factor, the tasting factor, and the smelling factor, the five senses of the brand. And after that, Knapp (2001) considered the brand needs visual conversion to symbol, color, font, and style, to be efficiently and correctly delivered to consumers. And then Lindstrom (2005) specified that colors create obvious brand association, which is also concrete to communicate with consumers. Different colors represent different emotions and affect consumer reactions; that is, brand color relates to brand personality (Moser, 2003).

### Chang and Lin's study

Chang and Lin (2010) find out costumer perception of brand traits from colors use in the brand logo. This research utilizes the method from research of Romaniuk and Sharp (2000) to discover the owned attributes for each brand color. The concept is to reduce usage bias of data. The problem of usage bias is that brands with more users tend to score higher on image responses. This study calculated an expected number of responses and then identified the deviations from expected values. Deviations are shown (Table 2):

Table. 2. Brand color deviations from expected (Chang and Lin, 2010).

trait	red	orange	yellow	green	blue	purple	black	white
Out of doors	-1.4	3.2	-1.4	4.4	3.2	-2.8	-1.3	4
Spirited	3.8	3.4	9.8	-2.3	-2.5	-2.6	-5	-4.7
reliable	-5.2	-4.6	-4.2	3.7	4.5	-4.6	8	2.3
Upper class	-3	-2.5	-2.1	-4.2	2.6	-4.5	3.2	1.4
charming	3.1	-0.4	0	-2.1	-6.2	8.6	-2.7	-0.4
wholesome	-4.4	2	0.5	8.5	1.3	-3	-2	-2.9
Up to date	1.6	1	-1.5	-3.5	-2.7	7	1	-2.9
Down to earth	-5.3	0.1	-0.4	3.6	-0.5	-3.9	-6.8	13.3
Imaginative	-1.3	0.1	-2.4	-3.4	-0.5	7.1	2.2	-1.7
Intelligent	0.9	-1.8	-1.3	0.7	3.6	-3.8	1.3	0.4
Daring	11	-1.7	0.8	-4.1	-5.3	2.3	0.5	-3.4



Tough	0	-2.7	-1.2	-2.1	2.7	-1.7	8.5	-3.4
Successful	4.2	-0.5	-2	-2.9	1	-3.5	3.8	-0.2
Cheerful	-0.6	6.6	8.1	-2.7	-0.8	-2.4	-6	-2
honest	-3.3	-2.2	-2.7	6.5	-0.6	-1.2	-4.7	8.2

This study singles out owned traits when a brand color has a positive deviation that is more than 50% of the largest negative deviation (Table. 3). For instance, charming and imaginative are more appropriate to color purple than others. The estimated deviations can help manager to identify brand traits and position based on what traits that a corporate attempt to convey. For instance, red owns trait of daring and is appropriate to companies which may convey fashionable and encouraging perception. Yellow is expected to represent a cheerful brand. Black is reliable and tough which may convey dependable and solidness of a corporate brand. White constantly represents sincerity and pure of a corporate brand (Chang and Lin, 2010).

Table. 3. Owned traits of each brand color (Chang and Lin, 2010).

Traits	50% of largest negative deviation	Brand Color
Spirited	-2.5	Yellow (+9.8)
Reliable	-2.6	Black (+8)
Charming	-3.1	Purple (+8.6)
Wholesome	-2.2	Green (+8.5)
Imaginative	-1.8	Purple (+7)
Down-to-earth	-3.4	White (+13.2)
Daring	-2.6	Red (+11)
Tough	-1.7	Black (+8.5)
Cheerful	-3	Yellow (+8.1) and Orange (+6.6)
Honest	-2.3	White (+8.3) and Green (+6.5)

## Impact of some external factors on consumer's color association

Color psychology is almost general but there are some factors such as culture, gender and age that affect consumer's perception of colors.

### Culture

According to researcher Joe Hallock "Eskimos use 17 words for white as applied to different snow conditions, where in the Northwest United States there are only 4 or 5". For instance, in the West, green is associated with hopefulness, white with purity, black with mourning, red with love or revolution and yellow with hatred. In China, white is associated with righteousness and yellow with trustworthiness. Black is associated with dullness and stupidity in Indian culture, while red suggests ambition and desire (Kreiter and Kreitler, 1972). Certain colors are also preferred in certain cultures. In one study, researchers asked subjects to indicate which color they associated most with certain words. The color red was associated with love for people of China, Korea, Japan and the USA, but the Chinese also associated red with being good tasting. Some of the most important differences noted were which colors indicated expensive or inexpensive products. Whereas in China and Japan, the color gray was associated with the word inexpensive, the opposite was true among US consumers. In Asian countries, the color purple was associated with expensive, but not in the USA. For instance, more than 50 percent of Americans in one study considered red to be the color associated with soft drinks. However, Coke has not been as successful in reinforcing this association in Korea or Japan. In these countries, yellow is the color more often attached to soft drinks (Jacobs, et al., 1991).

Color preferences and meanings are learned and can be changed. In a study conducted by Walton, children's color preferences were modified when they were presented with a gift in a box of a certain color. Through this method, the children came to favor the color of the gift box, their previously least preferred color (Kreiter and Kreitler, 1972). Pentel, a company that makes school supplies, found that red and green were not preferred colors in school supplies because teachers grade in these colors and they may have negative associations for students (Rouland, 1993). Here is an infographic that shows color perceptions in different cultures. The numbers represent some traits, and the letters show different cultures. For example, anger is represented by "red" in western/American cultures, and by "black" in hindu culture (Fig. 4) (McCandless, 2012).

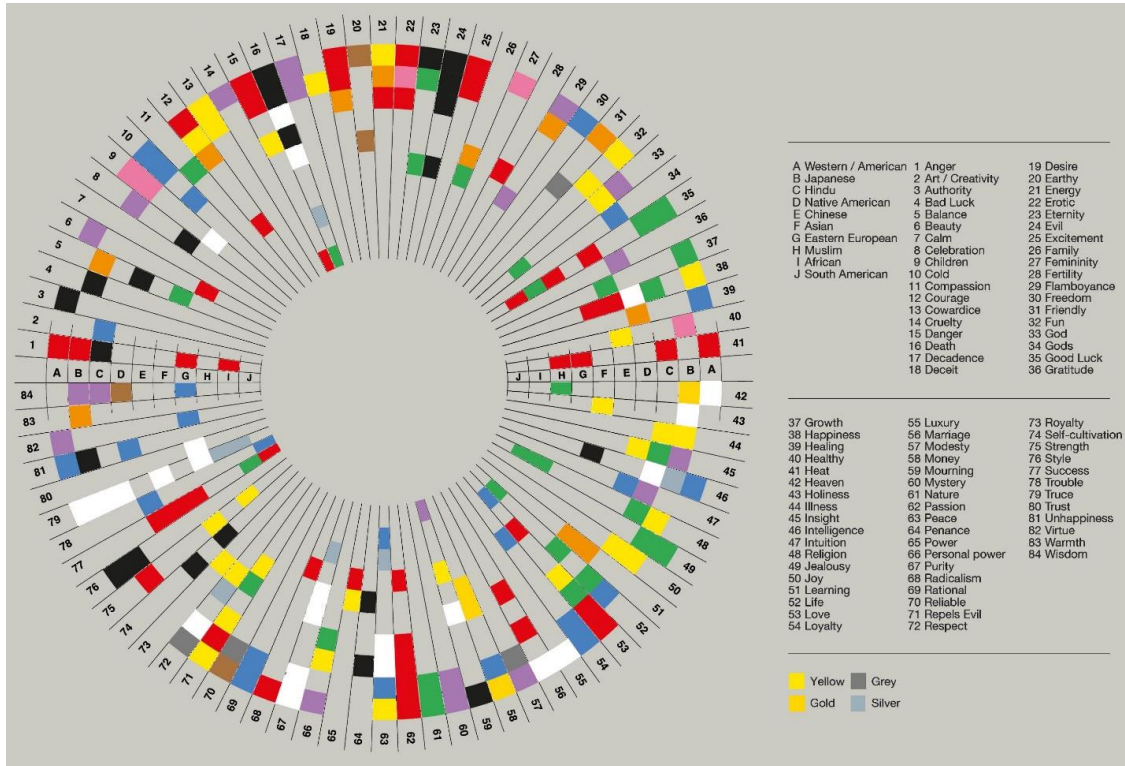


Fig. 4: Color associations around the world (McCandless, 2012).

## Gender and age

Conformity in society leads individuals to choose certain colors based on their associations with gender. In the USA pink is considered a feminine color and is associated with baby girls, rather than boys. However, with the correct associations attached to it, even pink can become a color purchased by men. For instance, sales of fuchsia pick-up trucks increased in 1994, but the sales were not to women (Triplett, 1995). In this case a cultural norm was broken and men may have come to associate the color with excitement or speed. The marketer can have an effect on this process by using the color matched with the appropriate images in advertising. A study shown about the effects of gender and age on favorite color, according to that research results, the favorable color of the consumers does not depend on their age or education. However, it was learnt that the favorite colors are predetermined by gender. For example, the female respondents indicated white, blue and green as their favorite color much more statistically significantly frequently, while the men preferred red more often than women (Sliburytea et al., 2014).

## sensory branding

Sensory marketing suggests using all the human senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch to influence customers. The sensory marketing is the innovative solution to create the emotional characteristics of the brand/product and to provide it with solid position in market, as well as to secure strong relations with a consumer (Hultén, 2011; Funk & Ndubisi, 2006; Kosslyn & Thompson, 2003). The sensory marketing provides an excellent opportunity to use color as the tool to form the product's differentiation. The colors



may create emotional connections resulting in differentiation of the products, acquired competitive advantage, reinforced loyalty, increased sales, shorter perception time of the brand mark, longer stay of consumers in the store, created positive emotions and relation with the consumer, encouragement to buy on impulse, and increased number of intentions to go shopping again (Sliburyte, 2014). The scientists (Cian & Cervai, 2011; Kauppinen-Räsänen, & Luomala, 2010; Hultén, 2012; Leigh, Peters & Shelton, 2006) state that color is an inexpensive and effective tool used to create positive opinion of the consumers about the brand/product.

Starbucks, brand by bringing people together, is the example to explain how a brand create connections with consumers through sensory. Frist, from the free Wi-Fi service to the music played in store, the large tables with room for groups and meetings all set up and installation of the stores are designed to encourage the inter-actions between customers. Sweet (2008) described how its business is happening and people are sharing, go into any Starbucks. Everything in there is about connection, discovery, inspiration and creation. The interior design was embodied a trendy style decoration which is comfortable: The cafe uses loft style, bright spaces with inspired furniture (Amic, 2017). Choosing of brand color should be on the base of goals, vision and mission of the company.

### **Vision and mission of the company**

Vision and mission are very important management tools which cannot be separated from a corporate strategy and they provide firms to achieve high performance and to survive in a long time period. Developing a vision statement is often considered the first step in strategic planning, preceding even development of a mission statement. Many organizations generally have both a vision and mission statement (Ülgen and Mirze, 2007). The vision is the statement of the desired future state of the organization within the arena of competition. It is a future orientated term (Raynor, 1998). The mission statement is a declaration of an organization's reason for being. It answers the vitally important questions: What is our business? Why do we exist? What are we trying to accomplish? (Bart, 1997). A good mission statement describes an organization's purpose, products and services, markets, philosophy, and basic technology (Kemp and Dwyer, 2003). A vision statement describes what the firm wants to be in the future while a mission statement describes what the firm does and mission is a special task which is given to the firm to reach the desired future of the firm defined in the vision (Orhan et al., 2014).

### **Some case studies**

**DropBox:** The mission of Dropbox is to simplify life for people around the world. Dropbox lets people bring their docs, photos and videos everywhere and share them easily. As they say "Accountability at the Top: Being worthy of trust is one of our core values at Dropbox, and it begins on the inside". Blue is probably the most universally-preferred color and this file sharing service uses it to reflect reliability, trustworthiness, and communication which works well for a collaboration tool like DropBox (Fig. 5).

**Google:** Google's corporate mission is "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful". The original logo designed by Ruth Kedar back in 1998 used the same colors you see today. She said it best: The colors evoke memories of child play, but deftly stray from the color wheel strictures so as to hint to the inherent element of serendipity creeping into any search results page (Fig. 6).





Fig. 5: Dropbox's logo.



Fig. 6: Google's logo.

**Uber:** Uber is an online taxi service. They want to induce safety and being harmless. The mission of company is to ignite opportunity by setting the world in motion. The controversial ride-hailing service's original colors of blue, black and grey offer indication of a cool, sophisticated, and reliable premium service (Fig.7).

**Lufthansa:** The company vision is "to assure safety and reliability for our customers" Although they use blue like most airlines to induce safety and reliability, also ventured into the rare use of yellow to signify brightness, optimism, exclusivity and daring (Fig. 8).



Fig. 7: Uber's logo.



Fig. 8. Lufthansa's logo.

**Evernote:** Evernote was founded to address a growing problem that technology helped to create: how to succeed in a world of an ever-increasing volume and velocity of information. Their purpose is to give people the time and freedom to focus on what matters by helping them to live more organized lives. Mission of the company is "remember everything" and as a productivity app, Evernote uses green as its resting color, to evoke a sense of stability and peace in its users (Fig. 9).

**National Geographic:** Their statement is "at National Geographic, we believe in power of science, exploration and storytelling to change the world". The logo with its iconic yellow frame representing a window or portal to the world. National Geographic's yellow is best associated with knowledge of wisdom and the feeling of joy (fig.10).



Fig. 9: Evernote's logo.



Fig. 10. National Geographic's logo

## Conclusion

Between every human senses, sight is the most powerful sense to get information from the world. Colors are present in every one's life and have effects on emotion. Each color has its own meaning and trigger special emotions. In this study different color theories are defined and then summarized and gathered together, that is useful for someone who wants to get information about color traits and watch them in base of different color theories. In branding it is important to make an emotional connection between people and brand. So color is important in the process of building a brand. In this study brand image explored to be influenced by color traits. There is a study by Chang and Lin (2010), that discovered the owned attributes for each brand color. For instance, red owns trait of daring and is appropriate to companies which may convey fashionable and encouraging perception. Yellow is expected to represent a cheerful brand. Black is reliable and tough which may convey dependable and solidness of a corporate brand. White constantly represents sincerity and pure of a corporate brand. The results reveal that color affects consumer perception for brand identity. Consumers select their preferred colors, which may convey similar value to their perceptions. That is, the effect of color generates related emotions which build the relationship between consumer and brand. The produced emotions also attract ideal consumers, connect the consumer to the brand, and shape corporate image. The results also show that color traits deliver corporate identity which enfolds corporate brand messages. Successfully using color to convey corporate image enhances consumer purchase behavior. This is because color traits affect emotions and positive consumer evaluation of corporate image. Colors also increase consumer awareness of the spirit of companies and increase recognition and purchase intention.

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