Colour and consumer buying behaviour in the UK fashion industry

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Colour, Consumer Behaviour, Emotion, Fashion Industry, Purchase Intention, UK Market

Abstract
Purpose*: To investigate how colour influences various consumer buying behaviours in the UK fashion industry. Examining how colour impacts consumer purchase intentions and emotional responses, especially in impulsive buying situations.*
Design/methodology/approach: *Based on a positivist philosophy and using a quantitative approach, the primary data for the study was obtained through structured questionnaires distributed to fashion consumers in the UK. The secondary data was reviewed to provide a theoretical context on the interface between the psychology of colour and consumer behaviour.*
Findings: *The study demonstrates that purchase behaviour of consumers is positively affected by different colours. Various emotions that are associated with different colours positively and negatively affect purchasing decisions. Colour preference may also trigger impulsive purchasing and affect product perceptions.*
Practical implications*: The study explains the psychological and emotional value of colour as a marketing tool in the context of fashion. This research highlights the importance of colour in consumer attraction, satisfaction, and positioning of a brand to aid fashion retailers and designers towards improved strategic colour use.*
Originality/value*: This research is one of the few empirical studies investigating the influence of colour on consumer behaviour in the UK fashion industry. It combines psychological and marketing approaches to further develop the understanding of purchase motivation triggered by different colours.*

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Introduction

Colour selection is a relevant aspect of marketing with implications on thought and behaviour (Chan and Meng, 2020). Kotler and Keller (2015) explained marketing as both an art and a science of engaging with target markets by emphasising consumer value for maintenance, attraction, and growth of consumers. The fashion industry is not just retail and online stores, brands, magazines, it has many smaller industries in it that combine to make an eco-system (Terrell, 2019). This study is based on the impact colour has on consumer buying behaviour with its focus mainly being on the fashion industry in the UK. According to Elf et al (2021) who did a study on advancing the circular economy and got insight from small sustainable fashion businesses based in the UK, fashion is one of the biggest contributing sectors to carbon emissions globally. This industry alone is responsible for 10% of the annual emissions. Cost effective online fashion like fast fashion have given a lot of access to consumers (Mintel, 2022). Jiang et al (2019) sheds some light on the impact on fast fashion on the environment, referring to it as destructive and consumers not utilising 50% of the items in their closets. The fashion industry is the world's second most polluting industry after the oil industry,25% of chemicals used globally are for the production of textiles, the fashion industry is the

second largest user of water globally with the first being the agricultural industry (World Bank, 2019),. If the industry is to be more eco-friendly, more research on consumer preference is required.

Literature review

Colours

One of the most essential aspects of marketing is the correct utilisation of colours. According to Juwaheer and Sahye (2019), colours have been used in product differentiation, retention, sales increments, evoking positive emotions in consumers, and also create an emotional attachment. Lim et al (2020), points how colour perception is achieved in two ways which are embodied and referential. Embodied means it occurs naturally from the biological response to colours with an example of the colour red which increases situation and arousal. Pilelienė and Grigaliūnaitė (2017) describe colour as light wavelengths absorbed by the eye and translated by the brain into the various colours people see. Colour has three aspects of consideration when it comes to a proper analysis and understanding. Labrecque (2020) shows the three dimensions of colours which are hue, saturation, and value. Li et al (2020) highlights how understanding colours is important for the fashion retailing industry. Uncertain consumer reactions may lead to either short product life or excess inventory due to a mismatch in supply and demand. Retail stores and environments have also been shown to affect consumers perception and purchase intentions based on colours. Kim et al (2020) describe colour hue as being established by light wavelengths. Red and yellow are longer in wavelength than blue and green which makes the former be referred to as warmer colours whilst the latter are considered cool colours.

On the basis of psychology, people get uplifted by warm colours with effects like an increase in blood pressure and blinking but consumers feel more pleasure and attraction when exposed to cool colours (Elliot & Maier (2014). The emotional state of pleasure increases purchase intention and also increases online shopping when used on the online stores. Cool colours derive their pleasure inducing reactions from the consumer perception of calmness, elegance and comfort which are attributed to luxury. Warm colours are stimulating and cause consumer concentration and are linked to sophistication, creativity, and innovation (Kim et al, 2020).

Consumer buying behaviour

Roy and Datta (2022) defined consumer behaviour as the study of how people choose, acquire, utilise and discard of items, experiences, data, and services to fulfil their needs and the consequences of these various choices have on themselves and their community. Consumer behaviour has been studied by social scientists for over 50 years. According to Rozenkowska (2022) consumer behaviour is very important to understand how consumers acquire, use, and dispose of the products. It is a very diverse and broad topic due to the constant changes in the behavioural patterns of consumers caused by eternal factors like society, economic environment, technological advancement affecting the intrapersonal perspectives of consumers (Saeed, 2019). To ensure the continuous growth of this field, constant research and understanding is required as to avoid waste and meet the requirements of consumers (Peighambari et al,2016).

A study in Malaysia conducted on generation Y which are commonly referred to as millennials portered that generation Y is enthusiastic about fashion and may even spend nearly 70% of their earning on fashion and relative goods (Valaei and Nikhashemi,2017). This study found that, the factors that influenced their buying behaviour in the fashion industry are brand and being able to identify themselves with the brand with style, price and social perception being highly influential on their buying behaviour as well. A study by Wiederhold and Martinez (2018) in Germany on ethical consumer behaviour found similar reasons for consumers purchase behaviour. Price was the main reason they would avoid sustainable fashion with cost effectiveness being a major concern and aspect of consideration for young professionals and consumers because having a limited budget makes you prone to price sensitivity.

Other aspects of consideration from consumers in sustainable fashion are, a lack of transparency and awareness of such products being available in the store, lack of availability of sustainable fashion brands and sustainable fashion not being trendy or having desirable designs led to consumers opting for other fashion items (Wiederhold and Martinez, 2018). According to Lim et al (2020) colour can be used to convey

a message of being environmentally friendly in adverting to increase sustainable buying decision. The colour green is more effective than the colour grey in giving attitudes that are eco-friendly and increasing purchase intentions of sustainable items whilst grey has the opposite effect. Colour affects advertising effectiveness which affects buying intention.

Dharmananda et al (2022) points out how colour and packaging affect consumer behaviour. In this study, a survey was conducted from 316 respondents with 61% being male and 39% being female. The results showed that 52.8% of the participants' thought colour is one of the first things to attract consumers, 80.7% thought that colours have an influence on different age groups in their buying behaviour, 47.8 said colour influences buying power individually irrespective of gender and 93% thought society plays an important role in colour perception of a product. Society having an influence on colour perception in line with the findings of (Valaei and Nikhashemi ,2017; Lim et al, 2020).

Sustainable product consumption has become import due to resource waste, but consumers also lack the expertise to assess the adequate characteristics of eco- friendly products. Labels therefore communicate to consumers to help them decide by reducing the risk of consumers getting products that are not in line with their preference (Lee et al ,2020). A label can indicate to consumers the quality and eco-friendliness of a product like clothes made from organic fibres.

Colours vs Consumer buying behaviour

According to Koh (2018) women prefer the colour black which is not only the most used colour in fashion but also tends to mainly be worn by consumers during economic recession. In forecasting fashion, the relationship between fashion and mood is the basis for consumer choice. Colour can be symbolic, and it is through colour that consumers like to express their emotions. Black symbolises power, elegance and confidence but can also have negative connotations of rebellion nihilism loss and lack. Related to black fashion is the gothic trend. Not all black fashion is gothic but mostly all gothic fashion is black. Gothic is a fashion trend that emerges when there is pain, anxiety and healing required. Putting into consideration the recent pandemic, on this basis it is possible to see a rise in consumer fashion trend being that of the colour black.

Juwaheer and Sahye (2019) state how colour is more important to females than males especially in respect to fashion items but both genders display a high amount of interest in colour in regard to items that they use to express themselves such as clothes and shoes. Although, according to the findings of a study conducted by Jiang et al (2019), when analysing the colour preferences of solid shirts between males and females, females preferred solid coloured that were both easy to match and made them look slim while males also preferred solid colour shirts that were easy to match yet made them look masculine. Jiang et al (2019) elaborate about how people have an ability to appreciate aesthetic characteristics and attributes of objects which includes colours, designs, and textures. Neuro-aesthetics is the practice of examining how beauty is perceived and appreciated. This discipline is a combination of neuroscience and phycological aesthetics. Colour emotion is a term used by practitioners of this discipline to refer to the emotion felt during the perception of colour. Multiple researchers have indicated that parts of the human brain which are responsible for emotional arousal are directly affected by colour with various colours or different colour arrangements generally having different meanings in individuals. Due to colour being a part of psychology, many factors influence which may include age, climate, sex, geographic conditions, race, and culture.

Colour preference stems from individual taste but when it comes to marketing, colour appropriateness has to be considered. Colour appropriateness is how well a colour is linked or matched to a cause or item and mismatching colour to the message you attempt to convey can result in consumers misunderstanding or dismissing that form of communication. Researchers have studied consumer choice in relation to colour appropriateness for various categories of products. For example, red and yellow depict power, loudness, and intensity, and would be appropriate to use in sports and supercar advertising. Red can also be used to market chocolates, fragrances, and nightclubs (Lim et al, 2020).

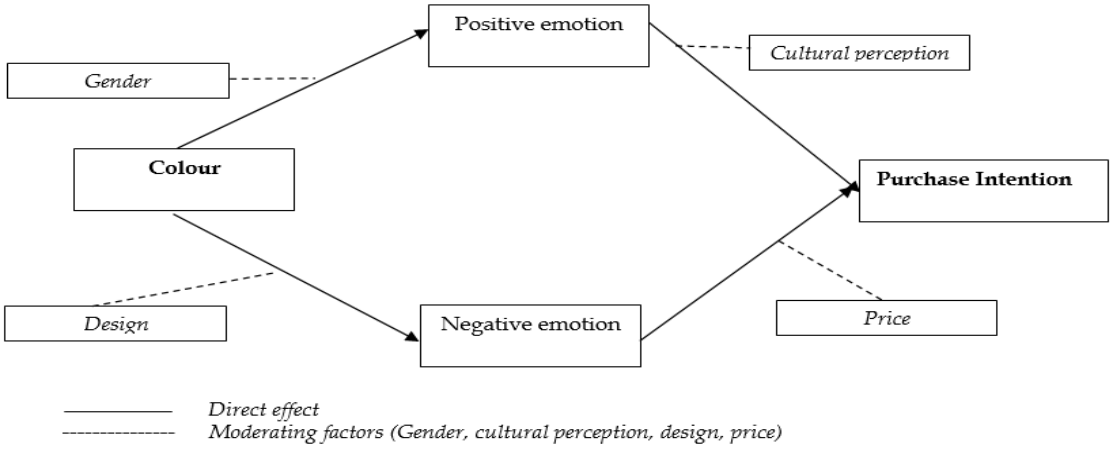
According to Pilelienė and Grigaliūnaitė (2017) psychologists classified colours as warm which are be red and yellow, and cool which are blue and green. This study indicates that the effective selection of colours can stimulate impulse buying behaviour, but inappropriate colours can negatively affect sales. The

conclusion of this study shows that colour temperature when used in adverts has got big impact on the buying intentions of consumers. There the appropriate choice of colour temperature used in marketing can increase the possibility of effectively communicating to consumers.

The impulse buying theory which is also called Hawkins Stern (1962) impulse buying theory was developed on the founder's belief in behaviour being influenced by motivation. Impulsive buying generally comes from external surprises which also opposes fundamental leadership principles. The idea of this theory is that consumer behaviour is predictable, and by studying consumer behaviour, effective strategies can be developed to capitalise and benefit from people's predictability which is influenced by purchase drivers (Roy and Datta, 2022).

Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation highlights why consumers are driven by needs at different times. These needs are arranged in a hierarchical manner based on their significance which are physiological needs meant for survival like air, shelter, water and sleep, safety and security needs, social needs like friends and family, esteem needs like self-esteem, confidence and achievement and self-actualization needs. When the most pressing need is met, that need seizes to be a source of motivation and the next need in the hierarchy will have to be satisfied (Jisana, 2014, Maslow 1943)). Kotler and Keller (2015) developed the buying decision model which is based on five stages. These five stages are the basic psychological processes that have a significant influence on consumer buying decisions. Problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, buying decision and post buying behaviour (Kotlet, 1965; Qazzafi, 2019). Consumers do not explicitly go through all five stages, some may be skipped or reversed.

Conceptual framework



This conceptual framework highlights how colour influences positive and negative emotions through it being used as a means of expression. Positive and negative emotions would then impact consumer purchase intentions either positively or negatively. According to koh (2018), it is through the consumers desire to physically express how they are feeling through their dressing, colours are capable of meeting that desire which affects purchase intention. It is this process of colour affecting emotions which stimulates impulsive behaviour in consumers (Pilelienė and Grigaliūnaitė , 2017). The key variables and constructs in the conceptual framework:

Colour acts as the independent variable, evoking both positive and negative emotions, which in turn affect purchase intention. Gender, cultural perception, design, and price are moderating factors that influence the strength of these relationships. Independent Variable: Colour; Mediating Variables: Positive Emotion, Negative Emotion; Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention; Moderating Factors: Gender, Cultural Perception, Design, Price

The framework proposes that effective use of colour enhances positive emotions (e.g., excitement, pleasure, calmness) and reduces negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, confusion), thereby increasing consumers' purchase intentions within the UK fashion industry.

Results

Table 1

What is your age?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	24	28.6	28.6	28.6
	25-34	26	31.0	31.0	59.5
	35-44	17	20.2	20.2	79.8
	45-54	15	17.9	17.9	97.6
	55+	2	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

What is your gender?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	28	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Female	54	64.3	64.3	97.6
	Prefer not to say	2	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 3

What is your status?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed	31	36.9	36.9	36.9
	Unemployed	2	2.4	2.4	39.3
	Student	51	60.7	60.7	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 4

How often do you buy clothes?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Once a week	2	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Once a month	20	23.8	23.8	26.2
	2-3 times a month	36	42.9	42.9	69.0
	Every new season	24	28.6	28.6	97.6
	When there is a new fashion trend	2	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 5

How important is colour when considering what clothing to buy?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	46	54.8	54.8	54.8
	Important	31	36.9	36.9	91.7
	Neutral	3	3.6	3.6	95.2
	Not very important	2	2.4	2.4	97.6
	Not important at all	2	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 6

How often does the colour of a clothing item influence your decision to purchase it?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very often	34	40.5	40.5	40.5
	Often	29	34.5	34.5	75.0
	Sometimes	15	17.9	17.9	92.9
	Rarely	5	6.0	6.0	98.8
	Not at all	1	1.2	1.2	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 displays that the item required participants to select their age group. The number of the total respondents was 84 of which 18-24 were 28.6%, 25-34 were 31%, 35-44 were 20.2%, 45-54 were 17.9% and 55 and above were 2.4%. Table 2 displays how participants selected their gender. This table highlights that out of the 84 respondents, 28 were male which was 33.3%, 54 were female which was 64.3% while 2 preferred not to say which was 2.4%. Table 3-had respondents select their corresponding status. Out of 84 respondents, 31 were employed which was 36.9%, 2 were unemployed which was 2.4% and 51 were students which was 60.7%. Table 4-had respondents indicate the frequency in which they bought clothes. Once a week was selected by 2 participants which was 2.4%, 20 chose "once a month" which was 23.8%, 36 selected "2-3 times a month" which was 42.9%, 24 selected "every new season" which was 28.6% and 2 selected "when there is a new fashion trend" which was 2.4%.

Table 5-shows how important respondents consider colour to be when selecting clothing to buy. 46 participants chose "very important" which was 54.8%, 31 chose "important" which was 36.9%, 3 were neutral which was 3.6%, 2 chose "not very important" which was 2.4% and 2 chose "not important at all" which was 2.4%. Table 6-shows how respondents selected their answers to the item which required them to state how often the colour of a clothing item influenced their purchase decision. 34 respondents selected "very often" which was 40.5%, 29 selected "often" which was 34.5%, 15 selected "sometimes" which was 17.9%,5 chose "rarely" which was 6% and 1 chose "not at all" which was 1.2%.

Table 7

Do you believe that certain colours arouse emotions or moods when it comes to clothing?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes, both negative and positive emotions	50	59.5	59.5	59.5
	Yes, positive emotions	19	22.6	22.6	82.1
	Yes, negative emotions	2	2.4	2.4	84.5
	None at all	13	15.5	15.5	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 8

Which of these do you consider the most important when buying clothing items?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Colour	3	3.6	3.6	3.6
	Design	1	1.2	1.2	4.8
	Price	8	9.5	9.5	14.3
	Colour and design	28	33.3	33.3	47.6
	Colour and price	14	16.7	16.7	64.3
	Design and price	27	32.1	32.1	96.4
	None at all	3	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 9

What determines the reasons for your choices in fashion items when buying clothing?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Price and any available colours	14	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Price and a colour you like	29	34.5	34.5	51.2
	Design and any available colours	5	6.0	6.0	57.1
	Design and a colour you like	22	26.2	26.2	83.3
	Design and price	14	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 10

How likely are you to purchase clothing that does not come in a colour you want?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very likely	9	10.7	10.7	10.7
	Likely	10	11.9	11.9	22.6
	Neutral	17	20.2	20.2	42.9
	Unlikely	25	29.8	29.8	72.6
	Very unlikely	23	27.4	27.4	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 11

Have you ever bought a clothing item solely because you liked its colour?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	57	67.9	67.9	67.9
	No	15	17.9	17.9	85.7
	Maybe	12	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 12

When you go shopping for clothing online or in person, do you do so wanting to acquire a specific colour(s) in mind?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes, frequently	25	29.8	29.8	29.8
	Yes, occasionally	22	26.2	26.2	56.0
	Sometimes	27	32.1	32.1	88.1
	Rarely	6	7.1	7.1	95.2
	None at all	4	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 7-shows the responses from participants to the item which required them to answer if they thought that certain colours arouse emotions or moods in the context of clothing. 50 respondents chose "Yes, both negative and positive emotions" which was 59.5%, 19 chose "Yes, positive emotions" which was 22.6%, 2 selected "Yes, negative emotions" which was 2.4%,13 chose "none at all" which was 15.5%. Table 8- shows the responses from participants to the item which required them to select which of the options they thought were the most important when buying clothing. 3 respondents chose colour which was 3.6%, 1 chose "design" which was 1.2%, 8 chose "price" which was 9.5%, 28 chose "colour and design" which was 33.3%, 14 chose "colour and price" which was 16.7%, 27 chose "design and price" which was 32.1% and 3 chose "none at all" which was 3.6%. Table 9-shows the responses from participants to the item which required them to determine the reasons for the choices consumers made when buying clothing and fashion items. 14 respondents chose "Price and any available colours" which was 16.7%, 29 chose "Price and a colour you like" which was 34.5%, 5 chose "Design and any available colours" which was 6%, 22 chose "Design and a colour you like" which was 26.2%, 14 chose "Design and price" which was 16.7%.

Table 10-shows how participants responded to the item which inquired on the likelihood of them purchasing clothing if it did not come in a colour they want. Out of the total respondents, 9 were very likely which was 10.7%, 10 were likely which was 11.9%, 17 were neutral which was 20.2%, 25 were unlikely which was 29.8% and 23 were very unlikely which was 27.4%. Table 11-the responses from participants to the item when asked if colour had ever colour been a primary motivator when it came to purchasing a clothing item. 57 of participants responses were "yes" which was 67.9% as the majority, 15 were "no" which was 17.9% and 12 were uncertain which was 14.3% making it the minority. Table 12 is the responses from participants which answered how frequent they went shopping knowing what colour or colours they would want to get. 25 respondents chose "Yes, frequently" which was 29.8%, 22 chose "Yes, occasionally" which was 26.2%, 27 chose "Sometimes" which was 32.1%, 6 chose "Rarely" which was 7.1% and 4 chose "None at all" was 4.8%.

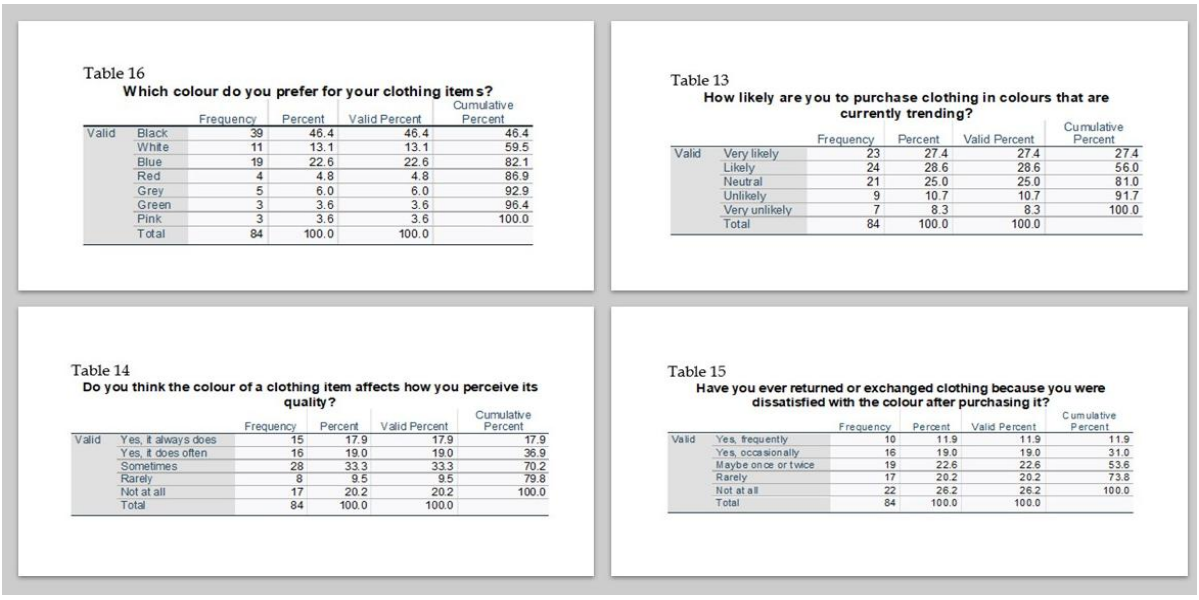


Table 16
Which colour do you prefer for your clothing items?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Black	39	46.4	46.4	46.4
	White	11	13.1	13.1	59.5
	Blue	19	22.6	22.6	82.1
	Red	4	4.8	4.8	86.9
	Grey	5	6.0	6.0	92.9
	Green	3	3.6	3.6	96.4
	Pink	3	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 13
How likely are you to purchase clothing in colours that are currently trending?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very likely	23	27.4	27.4	27.4
	Likely	24	28.6	28.6	56.0
	Neutral	21	25.0	25.0	81.0
	Unlikely	9	10.7	10.7	91.7
	Very unlikely	7	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 14
Do you think the colour of a clothing item affects how you perceive its quality?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes, it always does	15	17.9	17.9	17.9
	Yes, it does often	16	19.0	19.0	36.9
	Sometimes	28	33.3	33.3	70.2
	Rarely	8	9.5	9.5	79.8
	Not at all	17	20.2	20.2	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 15
Have you ever returned or exchanged clothing because you were dissatisfied with the colour after purchasing it?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes, frequently	10	11.9	11.9	11.9
	Yes, occasionally	16	19.0	19.0	31.0
	Maybe once or twice	19	22.6	22.6	53.6
	Rarely	17	20.2	20.2	73.8
	Not at all	22	26.2	26.2	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

Table 13 displays the likelihood of respondents in purchasing clothing with trending colours. 23 participants were very likely which was 27.4%, 24 were likely which was 28.6%, 21 were neutral which was 25%, 9 were unlikely which was 10.7%, 7 were very unlikely which was 8.3%. Table 14 shows how participants responded to the item which was about whether they thought the colour of a clothing item affected their perception of its quality. 15 respondents were "Yes, it always does" which was 17.9%, 16 were "Yes, it does often" which was 19%, 28 were "Sometimes" which was 33.3%, 8 were "Rarely" which was 9.5% and 17 were "None at all" which was 20.2%. Table 15 shows whether respondents had exchanged or returned an item they had purchased due to being dissatisfied with its colour.10 respondents chose "Yes, frequently" which was 11.9%, 16 chose "Yes, occasionally" which was 19%, 19 chose "Maybe once or twice" which was 22.6%, 17 chose "Rarely" which was 20.2% and 22 chose "None at all" which was 26.2%.Table 16 shows what colour the participants prefer for their clothing items. 39 respondents chose the colour black which was 46.4%, 11 chose white which was 13.1%, blue was chosen by 19 which was 22.6%, red was chosen by 4 which was 4.8%, grey was chosen by 5 which was 6%, 3 chose green which was 3.6% and 3 chose pink which was 3.6%..

Table 17

Correlations

		How often does the colour of a clothing item influence your decision to purchase it?	How important is colour when considering what clothing to buy?
How often does the colour of a clothing item influence your decision to purchase it?	Pearson Correlation	1	.586**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	84	84
How important is colour when considering what clothing to buy?	Pearson Correlation	.586**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	84	84

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation shows that the Pearsons correlation test was done to establish the relationship between colour and consumer buying behaviour. There is a moderate to strong correlation between colour and consumer buying behaviour.

Discussion

Consumer buying behaviour has been found to be both positively and negatively affected by colour. According to Pilelienė and Grigaliūnaitė (2017) colours stimulate impulsive buying in consumers when used correctly but colours considered inappropriate for the product or advertisement can have negative effects on sales. Both statements coincide with the findings in this study. Consumers were asked if they have ever bought a clothing item only because they liked its colour and 67.9% agreed to this question. This is evidence of colour stimulating impulse buying in consumers. Another finding in this study indicates that consumers are 27.4% very unlikely to buy clothing that did not come in a colour they wanted, 29.8% said they were unlikely with 20.2% remaining neutral. This highlights that colours that are considered not suitable or inappropriate for an item can have a negative impact on sales.

The correct utilisation of colours is important. Juwaheer and Sahye (2019) state how sales can be increased by using colours properly. Pontes and Williams (2020) indicated that colour has the ability to influence choices. The findings in this study show that colour influenced consumers purchase decisions significantly, with 40.5% stating it occurred very often and often for 34.5%. Consumers also considered colour very important when it came to buying clothing. This is reflected in their statements where 54.8% thought it was very important and 36.9% found it important. These two findings both correspond to how colour influences decision making and can increase sales as it is an important aspect to consumers. This data also shows that colour has a positive impact on consumer buying behaviour as long as the product colours cater to the colours majority of consumers consider appropriate and desirable. The findings in this study further indicates that consumers may sometimes or frequently shop for clothing both online and in person knowing the colour of the items they would like to acquire. 29.8% reported doing so frequently, 26.2% occasionally and 32.1% sometimes. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of consumers, retailers should be aware of the colours that appeal to their customers. Interestingly, 33.3% of consumers thought that the colour of a clothing item can sometimes affect their perception of its quality while, 17.9% thought it always does, 19% thought it occurred often and 20.2% thought it did not entirely. This finding compared to Kim et al (2020) which states that cool colours are pleasant to people and causes consumers to perceive and relate items with those colours as elegant and luxurious.

Factors influence consumer behaviour

Valalei and Nikhashemi (2017) stated that consumer buying behaviour was affected and influenced by brand, self-identification with the brand, and price in the Malaysian fashion industry. Wiederhold and Martinez (2018) gave a similar report highlighting that consumer buying behaviour in Germany was mainly affected by price due to the desire of consumers to have options that are easy on their pockets. Interestingly the findings in this study show that consumers consider colour and design to be the most important factor when buying clothing items with 33.3% of them saying so while 32.1% thought design and price are the most important factors and 16.7% said colour and price were the most. Wiederhold and Martinez (2018) stated how undesirable designs caused customers to switch to other fashion items even willingly ignoring the eco-friendly ones. A similar inquiry was made to the participants which had consumers select their reasons for choosing fashion items when buying clothing. 34.5% of consumers stated that price and a colour that is appealing to them were the main reasons that they acquire fashion items, 26.2% thought design and a colour that they like is the reason and 16.7% was for both design and price and price and any random assortment of available colours of the items. These findings complement each other in order to understand consumer preferences for their buying behaviour. This information highlights how three which are colour, price and design are all things that consumers take seriously. Consumers would prefer to have access to colours that they find appealing as that will cause them to acquire the product and the design of the product being to their liking at a competitive price range is the optimal combination for consumers with good designs and colours that are appealing to the majority of consumers being the second-best option.

Colours evoke emotions

The findings in this study from participants that were asked whether they believed that certain colours aroused emotions or moods in the context of clothing displayed that 59.5% believed both positive and negative emotions could be evoked by colour, 22.6% said only positive emotions, 2.4% thought only negative emotions while 15.5% said colour had no relation to emotions at all. The majority of them thinking that colours have an impact on emotions by arousing them is in accordance with the participants of Dharmananda et al (2022) in a survey about how colour and packaging affected consumer behaviour stated that they determined their colour preferences based on coloured related to their past experiences that aroused emotions in them. 72.8% of those respondents expressed that colour had an effect on their mood while 68.4% said bright coloured evoked cheerfulness and 77.8% stated darker colours evoked gloominess.

Consumer colour preference

Koh (2018) states that black is the most used colour in fashion and women prefer it. This colour is also preferred during economic recession this is due to colours being symbolic and how consumers use them to express themselves and their emotions. Gothic fashion is a trend that utilises the colour black a lot, but this does not mean all black fashion is gothic. Juwaheer and Sahye (2019) point out that colour matters more to females than to males in the fashion context although both use colour as a form of expression and the participants of that study preferred a lighter shade of blue. Colour mattering more to females than males could explain the demographic findings in this study, females being 64.3% of participants and males being 33.3% while 2.4% preferred not to say. Another finding in this study that is interesting is the colour preferences of participants for their fashion items. This item was done in a way that only allowed for participants to select one colour in order to paint an accurate picture of what colours they would go for if their options were slimmed down to one. The colour black was chosen the most at 46.3%, followed by blue at 22.6%, then white at 13.1%, grey at 6%, red at 4.8%, then green and pink both being at 3.6%. The colour yellow was included as an option, but it was not selected. These findings indicate that black the colour most preferred by consumers and align with the findings of Koh, Juwaheer and Sahye who pointed out that blue was another favourite.

Conclusion

This research shows empirical evidence on the significance of colour in the UK fashion industry. Research shows that colour triggers emotions and can impact the willingness to purchase a product which proves that colour psychology and impulse buying psychology correlates. The emotional responses of warm and cool shades or tones can impact a consumer's perceived value of a product or brand. Value differs in quality, desirability, and brand association. By assessing elements of design, colour, and price, their research shows that these three elements determined a consumer's buying decision. Colour serves as a psychological element in triggering impulsive purchasing. The psychological impact of versatility, sophistication, and economic sentiment alignment is seen in consumers' preference of neutral tones of black, blue, and white. Integrating colour strategies in the design of products, branding, and marketing can emotionally elevate consumer engagement as the used evidence shows which colours can evoke positive emotions and which colours can trigger sustainable purchasing.

This study provides evidence on the psychological and cultural aspects of colour in the UK fashion industry and enriches consumer behaviour and marketing literature. Subsequent research can carry out longitudinal studies and cross-cultural comparisons to deepen the understanding of the evolution of colour preferences and the variations across different consumer groups.

Key recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions presented the following recommendations are suggested

The findings in this study showed that consumers can sometimes perceive the quality of an item based on its colour, therefore retailers should seek to understand what colours consumers associate with quality

and luxury so as to effectively match the item with the required communication they intend for their customers to perceive.

Consumers stated they were unlikely to buy clothing items if it were in a colour that they did not like, and majority indicated that most of them have purchased clothing only because they found the colour appealing. This should be an indication to retailers on how understanding colour preferences of customers leads to increased purchase intention and stimulates impulse buying.

The three most important factors in clothing to consumers are colour, design, and price. Retailers should seek to understand what colour combinations work well with certain designs. Updating the colour and design catalogue to keep them trending appeals to the customers. A variation of any of the three stated factors could lead to an increase in buying.

According to Koh (2018), the colour black is the most used colour in fashion. When consumers were asked about which colour would be preferable for their clothing items to be, majority chose black with blue and white being in the top three. These should be taken into consideration by both manufacturers and retailers.

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