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Per questo numero una menzione agli studenti e alle studentesse del II anno del Biennio Specialistico in Grafica e Comunicazione nell'a/a 2023-2024 (Eleonora Blandini, Carlo Casetta, Luca Cimarosti, Michela Ferretto, Nicole Pilati) per aver realizzato il carattere tipografico IO01!-Wavy utilizzato in questo numero nella sezione 2. Tale progetto è stato elaborato durante il corso biennale Tecniche Grafiche speciali II tenuto dai docenti Andrea Amato e Massimo Tantardini.

Il naming della testata nasce da un'idea degli ex studenti: Guglielmo Albesano, Virna Antichi, Alessandro Masoudi, mentre frequentavano il Biennio Specialistico in Grafica e Comunicazione nell'a/a 2019-2020. Il visual concept del numero 0 del periodico è stato ideato dall'ex studente Alessandro Masoudi nell'a/a 2019-2020, il design grafico e l'impaginazione dalle ex studentesse Sara Baricelli, Giulia Bosetti, Elena Gandossi, Francesca Mucchetti (a/a 2020-2021).

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Image, color and memory.

Analysis on the use and memorization in visual communication.

Davide Dall'Acqua

ABSTRACT: The aim of this analysis is to explore how memory and image encoding change based on color components, how they are modified, and whether certain demographic variables of the subjects involved affect memorization. The goal is to obtain concrete data on the perception and recall of these images in a social context dominated by mass media, which increasingly rely on intense visual and multimedia communication. The questions sought to be answered are: What information remains imprinted in the viewers' memory? Are there specific factors that, as communicators, we should consider to improve the impact and retention of our images?

Keywords:

Visual memory - image encoding - color components - demographic variables - multimedia communication

Introduction

This research looked into how colors and memory are connected. It focused on how we look at images and how this could be useful for creating things online, like social media posts and brand messages.

To do this, a special test was created to see how color affects memory. The test also considered who was taking part. The goal was to understand how different colors can influence what we remember. This could give ideas for making visual messages that are easier to recall.

It's well-known that colors are really important

when creating any kind of communication. For brands, color is like a main visual code that helps people quickly link a message to a specific brand. Also, people can often recognize a product or brand just by its colors, even if they don't think about it much. This study wanted to show how choosing colors can affect not only how a brand looks but also how well people remember it.

Studies of Devismes and Roullet have shown that packaging that uses colors to stand out from other products is more likely to grab your attention. This means that picking the right colors is a smart marketing tool (not just about looking good). It can help a product be noticed right away and have an advantage in a store (whether it's a real shop or online).

In particular, Roulette has looked at which colors are best at getting attention. Orange is often seen as the top color for this, followed by red, blue, green, and then yellow. So, this experiment might look at how these colors affect memory based on these ideas.

The work of Amel Arabi also pointed out that colors can make it easier to understand and remember information. It also suggested that boys and girls might like different kinds of colors. Girls might prefer warmer colors like pink or purple, while boys might generally like cooler colors. This idea was something the experiment wanted to check.

The Role of Color

Colors are important because they can really influence how we think and process information. They can make it easier to

remember words and pictures. This makes color a key part of how our memory works.

Every color has three main parts: the actual color (like red or blue), how strong or pure the color is, and how light or dark it is. This study mostly focused on the actual color itself. The pictures used in the test were made by computers to look very realistic, like real photos. This was done to make it feel like a real online experience. It's hard to control exactly how strong or light colors are in real pictures, so focusing on the main color made it easier to study.

For this, images were created using generative AI. These images were based on the main colors found on a color wheel.

The experiment had a few steps. First, people were shown pictures of human figures. Each figure mostly had one of the chosen colors, and there was also a gray-scale image. Next, they saw more pictures of human figures, but this time each image had two colors that are opposites on the color wheel (plus a gray-scale figure on a colored background). The third part involved showing pictures of things that weren't human (objects and abstract shapes), both in color and in black and white.

In the last part, the people who took part were asked to remember which of the single-colored human figures they had seen in the first part of the test. They were told not to pick the figures that were only shown in this last question and had colors they hadn't seen before. The images that were created were put into a video. This video showed all the images from each test one after another for three seconds each. This short time was chosen because in online communication, watching a video for less than three seconds is often not really considered watching it at all.

The Analysis

The main differences between the male brain (about 1350 grams) and the female brain (about 1200 grams) are about weight. However, as Annamaria Testa wrote about the research of an American psychologist, Richard J. Haier:

«There's no link between brain size and intelligence. What seems to be connected to intelligence is having more gray matter than average in a few areas: the ones involved in memory, attention, and language».

So, we shouldn't think that having a bigger brain means someone is more intelligent. It might just mean they have a better memory. Because of this, in our experiment, it was interesting to see if and how the ability to remember things, especially the color of an image, was different between men and women. We wanted to understand how our bodies and how we see colors might be connected.

Frederic C. Bartlett, in his book *Remembering* also explained that when we first look at a picture, we mostly focus on the shapes, lights, shadows, and the overall way it's put together. Then, we start to notice the smaller details. This also seemed to happen in our test. When people were asked why they chose one image out of four, they often talked about how the lights and shadows were arranged. This shows that the lighting and visual structure of an image are important for what people like and how they see things. It highlights how the first things we notice about an image are key to forming a visual memory and making a decision.

Cesare Cornoldi brought up an important point. He suggested looking at what happens in our minds when there's a break in time

between seeing something and being asked to do something related to it.

A good example is the Brown-Peterson test. This test showed that if people don't have to do anything in between seeing something and being asked about it, they tend to mentally repeat the image, sound, words, or whatever they just saw. But it's harder if their brain is busy doing other things during that time. That's why we chose to use sequences of six or seven images in our test. This number is also mentioned in a famous paper called The magical number seven, plus or minus two. During the time between seeing an image and the question about it, the people in our test were busy looking at other visual information. They didn't have a chance to think back to the images they had seen before.

According to the Brown-Peterson idea, where things are in a sequence matters most for how well we remember them. People tend to remember the things at the beginning and the end of a series better than the ones in the middle.

In 1962, Keppel and Underwood did a study that followed up on Brown and Peterson's work. They looked at something called proactive interference in short-term memory. Their study showed that as people did more tests, they became much less able to remember things in the later tests. This suggests that our short-term memory can become less effective surprisingly quickly.

Considering all of this, we expected to see something similar when people were remembering images in our study. We thought that how well they remembered an image would depend a lot on where it was in the series. They would likely remember the first and last images in each test better, and they

would probably get fewer correct answers in the later tests compared to the earlier ones.

The Test

To create the images for the test, we used Midjourney. This is a tool that uses advanced AI to generate images. It allowed us to easily make different versions of the same image (called "strong variation"). This meant we could change small details but keep the overall look and feel of the image the same. This gave us the flexibility to see how small visual differences affected memory. It also helped us keep the experiment controlled and focus on the things we wanted to study, while making sure the images shown to the participants were consistent and relevant.

To create the images, the following prompts have been used:

TEST N°1 PROMPT

medium shot photograph of a young woman wi-th long xxxx dress, cinematic 4k epic detailed photograph shot

PROMPT TEST N°2

medium shot photograph of a young man with xxxx dress and yyyy background walking in front of the camera, detailed 4k detailed photograph shot

In the different versions, the parameter "xxxx" was replaced with the following colors: red, blue, yellow, green, orange, purple, and grey. In the specific case of grey, the parameter "black and white photography" was also added to obtain a completely desaturated image, in order to explore the impact of desaturation on the perception and memorization of the image. The parameter "yyyy", on the other hand, was used to indicate the complementary color in the context of

the images that incorporate two colors. This methodology allowed us to examine how the presence of complementary colors within the same image can influence the participants' ability to remember, offering a detailed look at the interaction between color, visual perception, and memory.

PROMPTS TEST N°3

Colorful abstract texture Black and white abstract texture Colorful hyper realistic object of real life 4k epic detailed photograph

Black and white hyper realistic object of real life 4k epic detailed photograph

Through the specified prompts, two images of realistic objects in black and white and two colorful ones were finally created, plus one colorful and one black and white abstract image. The aim was to explore if and how color, or its absence, influences the memorization of realistic and abstract elements.

Regarding information about the test participants, they were asked to provide details regarding their gender, age, and a self-definition of themselves as an emotional or rational person. These data also formed the fundamental parameters for analyzing the variations in image memorization based on their color. From the results, it appears that being male or female and age made a noticeable difference in how well people remembered things. However, whether someone thought of themselves as emotional or rational didn't seem to make a big difference in this study. This might be because it's hard for people to judge their own personality in this way.

In the study, there were 84 people: 62 were female and 22 were male. When we looked at age, 63 people were between 18 and 35 years

old, and 21 were between 36 and 65 years old. As for whether they felt more emotional or rational, 55 people said they were emotional, and 31 said they were rational.

The test had four parts. In the first three parts, people watched a video with different images and then had to pick which image they had seen from four choices that were slightly different. The fourth part showed the same video as the first test, but with three new images added that weren't there before. This was to check their memory after a short break of about four to seven minutes.

The results from the first test, which used single-colored images, showed that people remembered the images at the beginning and end of the video best (76.64% correct answers overall).

When we looked at the specific colors and where they were in the video, the results were:

- Blue (second position): 88.50% correct
- Grey (black and white, sixth position): 87.36% correct
- Purple (seventh position): 80.46% correct

The other colors had around 70% correct answers:

- Red (first position): 70.11% correct
- Yellow (third position): 70.11% correct
- Green (fourth position): 69.08% correct
- Orange (fifth position): 67.81% correct

When the images had two colors that are opposites on the color wheel (65.71% correct answers overall), people were better at remembering the images shown earlier in the video:

- Blue/Orange (second position): 88.23% correct

- Yellow/Purple (third position): 87.05% correct
- Red/Green (first position): 83.53% correct

For the color combinations shown later in the video, the results were different:

- Green/Red (fourth position): 72.94% correct
- Purple/Yellow (seventh position): 51.76% correct
- Grey/Colors (sixth position): 48.23% correct
- Orange/Blue (fifth position): only 28.23% correct

These results suggest that where an image appears in a series and the colors in it can change how well people remember it. It also shows that the specific combination of colors matters. For example, people remembered blue and orange together much better when the figure was blue (88.23%) than when the background was blue (28.23%).

The third test looked at how well people remembered details in pictures of objects and abstract shapes (both in color and in black and white). This part had some of the most surprising results. People were better at remembering details in objects than in human figures. Even the abstract shapes had a high average of correct answers (91.57% correct overall for this test).

Here are the detailed results for the third test:

- Black and white objects: 97.64% and 90.58% correct
- Colorful objects: 95.29% and 94.12% correct
- Black and white abstract shapes: 91.76% correct
- Colorful abstract shapes: 80.00% correct

This shows that people are generally good at remembering both realistic and abstract images, whether they are in color or not. However, they were slightly less accurate with colorful abstract shapes.

The study also looked at how gender and age affected memory. Females had a much higher percentage of correct answers than males, especially when looking at the earlier results. The color blue and black and white images were remembered best by both males and females. There also seemed to be a pattern in color preferences based on gender. On average, females remembered images with warm colors (orange, red, yellow) better, while males remembered images with cooler colors (blue, green, purple) better.

The average correct answers for single-colored images were:

- Females: 81.18% (4.54% higher than the overall average)
- Males: 60.87% (15.77% lower than the overall average)

For images with complementary colors, the differences between males and females were smaller:

- Females: 66.44% (0.73% higher than the overall average)
- Males: 60.87% (4.84% lower than the overall average)

The differences were even smaller when remembering details in pictures of objects and abstract shapes, suggesting that both groups were quite similar in their ability to remember these kinds of images.

When looking at age, there were also significant differences in memory. The 18–35 age group had a higher percentage of correct answers than the average, while the 36–65 age group had lower results. For single-colored figures, the results were:

- 18–35 years old: 80.56% correct (3.94% higher than the overall average)

- 36–65 years old: 61.69% correct (14.95% lower than the overall average)

For images with complementary colors, the differences in correct answers between the two age groups stayed similar, unlike what was seen with gender:

- 18–35 years old: 68.75% correct (3.04% higher than the overall average)
- 36–65 years old: 53.90% correct (11.82% lower than the overall average)

There were also noticeable differences in the accuracy of answers about images of objects and abstract shapes based on age:

- 18–35 years old: 93.23% correct (1.66% higher than the overall average)
- 36–65 years old: 82.58% correct (8.99% lower than the overall average)

This data suggests that age has a bigger impact on the ability to remember details than gender, with younger people tending to remember more accurately than older participants.

The results from the last part of the test, which asked people to remember the images from the very first video, also showed some interesting things. There were a total of 20 mistakes made by all participants (a mistake was not remembering an image that was in the first video). This means there was a 2.38% error rate when looking at all the choices made by everyone. When we looked at the mistakes based on the color of the images, the biggest errors were for orange images (5.95%) and black and white images (7.14%).

When we looked at gender, females had a lower error rate of 1.55%, while males had a higher error rate of 3.18%. When looking at the colors, females had more trouble

remembering purple (4.76%) and black and white (3.57%), while males had more trouble with orange (9.09%) and black and white (13.64%). This supports the idea that females tend to remember warm colors better and males tend to remember cool colors better. It also suggests that while black and white images might be easy to understand quickly, they might not be as memorable in the long run.

When looking at age groups, the 18–35 year olds had a total error rate of 1.90%, which was lower than the 36–65 year olds who had an error rate of 3.81%. Color didn't seem to have a huge impact here, but both groups had more errors with black and white images (6.35% for 18–35 and 9.52% for 36–65) and orange images (4.76% for 18–35 and 9.52% for 36–65).

Conclusions

The results of these tests confirmed some existing ideas and also raised new questions. It was seen again that people tend to remember things at the beginning and end of a sequence better, and that memory can change depending on the person and the color. However, orange didn't seem to be easier to remember, which was different from what some studies suggested. The idea that females remember warm colors better and males remember cool colors better was supported, and it was also found that females were generally better at remembering details.

The goal of this study was to explore how well people remember visual information and to think about how colors affect our ability to remember details. In a world where we see so many images all the time (in videos, online, in photos, and in ads), it's important to know what things about an image and about the

person looking at it help us remember and recognize things effectively. The results of this study agreed with some previous findings and also opened up new areas for discussion, showing that our ability to see and remember things is always changing. This understanding is especially important for people who create visual content, highlighting the need to use

what we know about memory and also to think about how the audience might feel in order to create things that are memorable, especially in the details.

Davide Dall'Acqua

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- [15] Time registred for the compilation of the first three tests and the vision of the fourth video

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