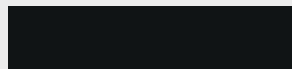


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**What is the Role and Significance of Colour
within Contemporary Branding and Marketing?**

Sophie Wade



BA (Hons) Graphic Design and Illustration

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the role and significance of colour within contemporary branding and marketing, through studying the implementation of colour within the visual communication of three distinct brands: Apple, *Just Essentials* by ASDA, and MAD//Fest London. The overall objective is to ascertain the ways in which colour has proved to be a powerful mechanism in facilitating the communication of various messages, evoking different emotional responses, and enabling the selected brands to distinguish themselves as leading pioneers within the technological sector, the everyday grocery retail market, and the bespoke events industry respectively.

Both primary and secondary research methods have been utilised to formulate this dissertation, including a comprehensive investigation of relevant literature, alongside theoretical approaches such as colour semiotics, scientific and temperamental colour wheels, and Humoral theory. Extraneous variables including stereotypical colour associations, socio-economic factors, temporal trends, and individual differences have been considered, and the subjectivity surrounding colour has been examined.

Interviews with industry professionals, including Sara Pollard at OurCreative, Dan Brain, the co-founder of MAD//Fest London, Steve Outridge at Legra Marketing, and Gavin Day at Stereo Creative have also been conducted, to obtain a thorough understanding of the complex thought processes involved in devising a colour palette for a brand.

Acknowledgements

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Lastly, I would like to give special thanks to Steve Outridge at Legra Marketing for facilitating my work placement opportunity at the beginning of this year and for introducing me to and enabling me to work directly with the team at MAD//Fest London.

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Introduction

“If one says “Red” (the name of a color) and there are 50 people listening, it can be expected that there will be 50 reds in their minds. And one can be sure that all these reds will be very different.” (Albers, 2013, p.3).

German-born artist, designer, and influential Bauhaus educator, Josef Albers, perceived colour as a highly subjective phenomenon. This dissertation has partly been inspired by his practice, and by the work of other notable colour theorists including Sir Isaac Newton and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Through this dissertation, the complexity of colour and its subjective nature will be explored, with an exclusive focus on the role in which colour plays within the field of contemporary branding and marketing. This dissertation will proceed with an analysis of how colour has been integrated within and has helped to shape the now instantly recognisable corporate identity for Apple, the global technology corporation. A selection of stereotypical colour meanings and associations within branding will be reviewed as part of this initial chapter, and how these have enabled the company to evolve from a small-scale start-up operating from a garage, to one of the world’s leading technology brands.

From undertaking an extensive period of primary and secondary research and investigation, which has involved the study of various academic literature, media publications, and the opinions of the public within the United Kingdom, as well as the completion of a personal work placement opportunity at the beginning of the year, two distinctive contemporary brands have been selected to underpin individual case study chapters within the body of this dissertation - the *Just Essentials* value product range that is offered by British supermarket chain ASDA, and UK-based event

management company MAD//Fest London. Interviews with professionals from both MAD//Fest and the creative agency which had direct responsibility for developing the *Just Essentials* range for ASDA have also been conducted to acquire a first-hand, academic understanding of their thought processes behind their decisions to use certain colours, and the messages that they intend to communicate to their target audiences via the means of their brand's colour palette.

An evaluation of this research will be undertaken through a range of methodologies, including scientific and physiological colour theory, and traditional colour wheels and diagrams dating back to the 17th century. This historical stance will be combined with colour semiotic theory; the interpretation of colours as visual cues, and the different meanings which are inferred whilst observing them. Colour semiotic theory also incorporates contextual variables, including culture, emotional psychology, and socio-economic factors, all of which can elicit variations in human colour perception, among both individuals and groups of people. The principles of these theories will be applied during the analysis of the two chosen brands, to provide a comprehensive interpretation of how colour has governed their corporate identities, how it has influenced the public perception of their brand, and the ways in which it has enabled them to distinguish themselves within two extremely competitive UK markets.

Chapter One: From Multicolour to Monochrome

In 1971, Steve Wozniak was working as an engineering intern for the computer company Hewlett-Packard, developing a mainframe computer, when he was introduced to the late Steve Jobs. The pair quickly developed a friendship over their shared passion for electronics and technology, and over the next few years would collaborate on a variety of projects, including 'blue boxes' - devices which allowed users to make long-distance phone calls free of charge, and a circuit board for the video game company Atari, for which Jobs was working during 1974.

In 1975, Wozniak joined the Homebrew Computer Club, a group of computer hobbyists based in San Francisco Bay, California. After attending his first meeting, he began developing an early prototype of his own personal computer, a machine which subsequently became known as the Apple I. The following year, Wozniak presented the completed prototype to Hewlett-Packard, proposing that the company manufacture the devices for personal use. However, his offering was met with repeated rejection. (Chu, 2017). Jobs however, had a profound level of confidence in Wozniak, and acknowledged the potential of his work. He therefore persuaded Wozniak to enter a formal business partnership, manufacturing and selling Wozniak's device, and on 1st April 1976, Apple Computers, Inc. was officially established.

Forty-six years later, Apple is now the world's most valuable company by market capitalisation, as of November 2022 (CompaniesMarketCap, 2022), and the brand has succeeded in achieving a reputation of being one of the most influential technology companies in the world. Accompanying Apple's offering of high-quality technological products and services is an unmistakable corporate identity, consisting

of an apple shaped logo with a bite taken from it, a symbol which has gained global recognition, and like the company itself, has experienced an evolutionary journey, particularly in connection with colour.

Apple first unveiled its bitten apple shaped logo in 1977. The apple was decorated with six horizontal stripes in a variety of colours, to coincide with the introduction of the Apple II, the world's first fully assembled computer that supported a colour display. (Knight, 2015). It is believed that the rainbow colours were chosen to convey a degree of user-friendliness, and to generate appeal for Apple computers among schoolchildren. (Lovejoy, 2014). There is also suggestion that the multicolour logo paid homage to Sir Isaac Newton's 1666 prism experiment, which resulted in the discovery of the spectrum of colours contained in sunlight. Apple had previously honoured Newton's laws of gravity and motion by adopting a monochromatic sketch of the scientist sitting underneath an apple tree as their initial logo in 1976, so when the multicolour logo appeared, it is unsurprising that this connection was formed.



Figure. 1 – The Multicolour Apple Logo (1977)

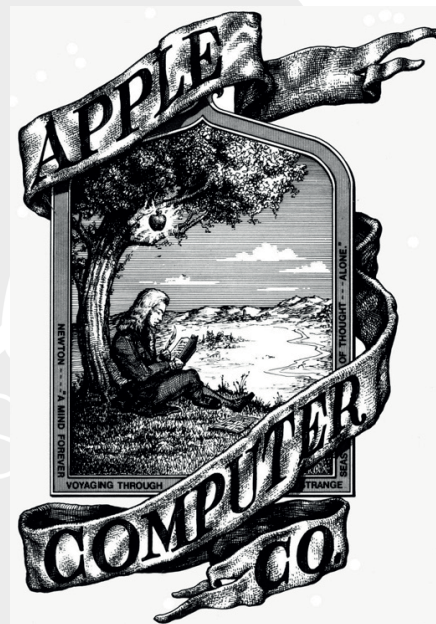


Figure. 2 – The Original Apple Logo (1976)

American graphic designer Rob Janoff was responsible for the creation of the two-dimensional apple shape and the accompanying splash of multicolour. According to Janoff's corporate website, this logo "was the only concept ever presented to Apple" and was "promptly approved for production by Steve Jobs." (Rob Janoff, © 2022). In an article written for the website *Highsnobiety*, the author states that "each stripe was printed in its own specially mixed color – at a considerable extra expense which Jobs approved because he felt the more vivid colors improved people's emotional response." (Hore-Thorburn, © 2022).

To acquire an understanding of Janoff and Jobs' motivation behind their decision to use a multicolour logo, the long-established associations with the rainbow must be examined. Traditionally, the rainbow is generally regarded as a symbol of hope and promise, a connection which originates from the Genesis flood narrative (Genesis chapters six to nine) within the Biblical story of Noah's Ark. During this text, the earth is flooded by God to eradicate all sin and evil. Following this, Noah departs the ark and observes a rainbow glistening over the ocean – a promise from God of an end to the flooding, a new beginning, and a brighter future. (Symbolism and Metaphor, 2020). In Celtic and Irish mythology, seeing a rainbow indicated a pot of gold at the other end. Although a pot of gold is typically depicted as a physical pot of treasure, the phrase can be defined metaphorically as "the realization of all one's hopes and dreams; ultimate success, fulfillment, or happiness." (Dictionary.com, © 2022).

Both Jobs and Wozniak had withdrawn from their studies at college prematurely, with Jobs having dropped out of Reed College in Portland, Oregon, after the first six months. During a commencement address to Stanford University students on 12th June 2005, Jobs reflected on his short time at college.

“After six months, I couldn’t see the value in it. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college was going to help me figure it out. And here I was spending all of the money my parents had saved their entire life. So I decided to drop out and trust that it would all work out ok.” (Jobs, 2005).

At a time where everything was seemingly at its darkest for Jobs, he remained optimistic and unafraid of failure. He saw potential in Wozniak’s work which others had overlooked, and together they established Apple with a dream of revolutionising the ways in which computers were perceived, and developing personal, user-friendly computers which were compact enough for use within homes and offices. In view of this, it could therefore be argued that the rainbow logo was emblematic of the collective creative ambition of Jobs and Wozniak, and in many ways illustrated a new beginning for not only the two founders as individuals, but also for the personal computing industry, which over the last four decades has been radically transformed by Apple’s innovative products, services, and business models.

When commenting on the multicolour logo, Jean-Louis Gassée, Apple’s Director of European Operations from 1981 to 1990 stated “one of the deep mysteries to me is our logo, the symbol of lust and knowledge, bitten into, all crossed with the colours of the rainbow in the wrong order. You couldn’t dream of a more appropriate logo: lust, knowledge, hope, and anarchy.” (History of the Apple Logo, 2018). He too, connected the rainbow logo with the concept of hope, and gave prominence to the colours being in the wrong order as a sign of anarchy, a term which in this instance, could be representative of Apple’s emergence as an organisation that would go on to continuously defy customary technological boundaries and adopt unconventional

working practices, something which was later highlighted when the company revealed their official slogan - 'Think Different'.



Figure. 3 – The Multicolour Apple Logo featured on the casing of the original 1984 Macintosh and the Apple II GS computer, pictured here on display at The Design Museum in London (2022).

The multicolour logo remained in use for twenty-one years until 1998, when it was discontinued by Jobs in a move to simplify the corporate identity for Apple, which at the time, had been experiencing a period of financial difficulty. At this point, there was potential for the logo to be regarded as old-fashioned, and perhaps as a throwback to the psychedelic colour schemes which were popular during the hippy movement of the 1960s and 1970s, rather than a representation of the forward-thinking brand image which Apple had constructed and wished to maintain. Although a revised version of the multicolour logo briefly returned in April 2021 for an advertisement promoting the new iMac computers which were available in seven different colours, if the original multicolour Apple logo was still in use today, it is extremely unlikely that it would have the same connections as it did back in the

1970s. Today, the primary societal association of the rainbow is with the flag of the LGBTQ+ community, and only recently, during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the rainbow became a prominent sign of showing solidarity with NHS workers in UK hospitals, with people decorating their homes with rainbow-themed artwork during the period of national lockdown to acknowledge those working on the frontline. Consequently, this is an interesting example of how temporal trends, the passage of time, and major societal developments can alter our perception of various colours.

In 1997, Apple introduced their monochromatic logos to their branding. A white version of the logo was placed on the lid of the Apple Powerbook G3 computer, with both white and black versions featuring on its packaging. (History of the Apple Logo, 2018). The following year, Apple released the iMac G3, a computer with translucent plastic casing in a colour known as 'Bondi Blue'. With this came a matching glassy looking 'Bondi Blue' logo for the company, which was positioned on the back of the G3's casing. However, the use of this logo was short-lived, and it was quickly ceased in favour of the monochromatic black logo which had appeared a year earlier.

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Figure. 4 - An Apple Computer poster for the launch of the iMac G3 at the 1998 New York Macworld Expo, held at the Javits Convention Center in New York City on July 7th 1998. The accompanying 'Bondi Blue' logo featured on this poster.

Over the next few years, Apple utilised two additional logos. In 2001, a glass-themed 'aqua' variant of the logo was revealed which corresponded with the introduction of the Mac OS X 10.0 operating system. Later in 2007, Apple entered a significant period of diversification with the launch of the first iPhone model and its operating system iOS, in June of that year. Once again, to mark this pivotal milestone for the brand, the logo was given a softer chrome finish which closely resembled the iPhone's aluminium casing. (History of the Apple Logo, 2021).



Figure. 5 - The Aqua Apple Logo (2001)



Figure. 6 - The Chrome Apple Logo (2007)

It was not until 2013 that the company made the decision to drift away from the embellished, product-driven logos, and fully embrace their monochromatic corporate identity from the late 90s. It could be argued that the reinstatement of a black and white palette, alongside the introduction of a neutral grey shade, has played a major role in establishing the high degree of brand loyalty and the strong emotional connections that Apple now has with their consumer base, as when considering the stereotypical associations with black, white, and grey, they are in many ways reflective of the general perception of Apple within today's society.

American colour specialist and prime consultant to Pantone, Leatrice Eiseman, provides an individual breakdown of black, white, and grey within her book *The Complete Color Harmony: Pantone Edition*. When writing about black, Eiseman states "In the world of high-tech, it is a viable option, as it is perceived of as advanced, modern, state-of-the-art, avant-garde, and highly evolved." (Eiseman, 2017). This description of the use of black within technology branding is extremely applicable to Apple, as they are widely seen as a forward-thinking technology

provider which from the very outset have been focused on innovating, breaking traditional norms, and pushing boundaries to revolutionise the technology industry.

Eiseman later refers to black as being “omnipotent and omnipresent.” (Eiseman, 2017). Apple’s use of black could therefore also be illustrative of their unconquerable level of influence and their ubiquitous presence. Whether it’s the iPhone, which has exceeded one billion active users worldwide as of 2022 (Matthes, 2022), the MacBook, or the Apple Watch, Apple products are encountered daily within homes, educational settings, workplaces, and whilst on-the-go, on a universal scale, allowing consumers to streamline everyday tasks including communication, health monitoring, shopping, personal organisation, and the consumption of entertainment such as music and video.

Within the book *Color Design Workbook: New, Revised Edition: A Real World Guide to Using Color in Graphic Design*, by Sean Adams, the author associates the application of white with being a symbol of perfection and simplicity. (Adams, 2017).

This is particularly pertinent to Apple’s elegant packaging, which evokes a complete sensory experience through clean, pure white, attention-grabbing boxes which have minimal amounts of text and imagery, and a soft touch finish which denotes luxury and sophistication. Furthermore, the products themselves appear high-end with stylish metallic casing, available in exclusive finishes such as gold, silver, ‘space grey’, and rose gold, and with an intuitive graphical user interface which is uniform across the entirety of the Apple product range, thus is easy to master.

Apple balances their use of black and white with the implementation of grey, which enables the brand to maintain a clean, neutral look. (Martins Ferreira, 2019). In *The Complete Color Harmony: Pantone Edition*, Eiseman articulates that grey is “found in

rock and stone, pebble and granite, those natural elements that have weathered and withstood the ravages of time.” (Eiseman, 2017). Her association of grey with everlasting natural elements such as rocks has seemingly been implemented by Apple within their branding for the new Apple Watch Ultra, a premium accessory retailing at £849.00 which is targeted at outdoor adventurers and designed for use within the natural world.

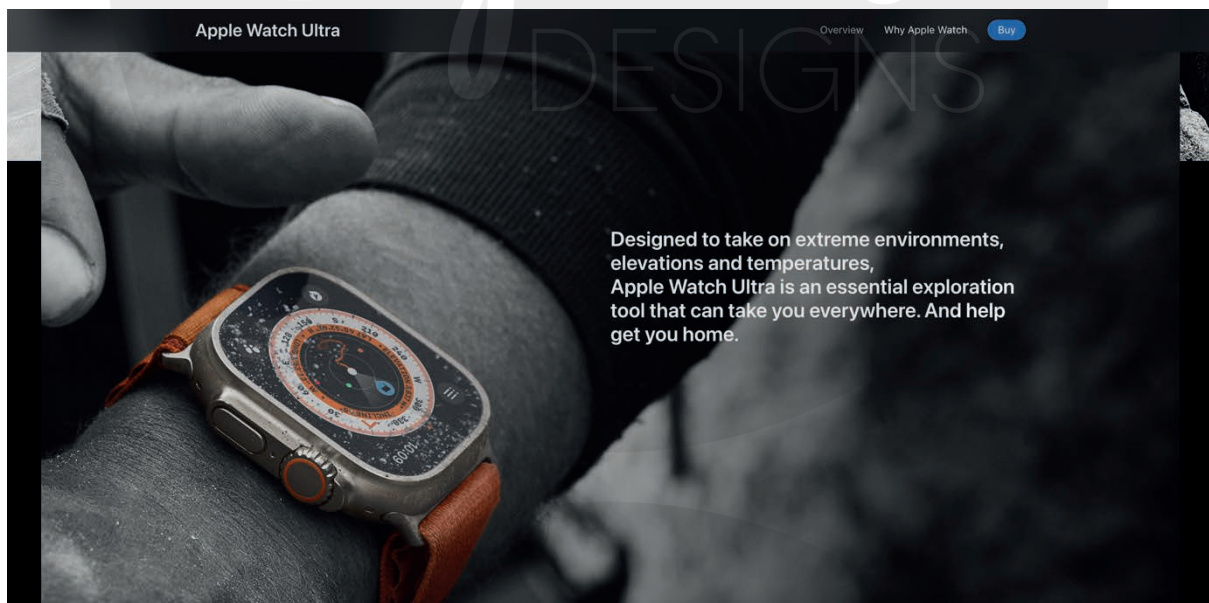


Figure. 7 - Introducing the Apple Watch Ultra (Apple Website, 2022)

The Ultra was unveiled on September 7th 2022, via a marketing campaign that features images of people exploring the desert, the arctic, the mountains, and the ocean. Its rugged design consists of strong titanium casing and both dust and water-resistant properties, enabling it to be worn within these adverse climates and whilst swimming and diving. It contains a range of high-quality features including up to thirty-six hours of battery life, precision dual-frequency GPS, and an eighty-six-decibel audible siren for use in the event of an emergency, which can be overheard from up to one-hundred and eighty metres away. (Apple, © 2022). Grey is frequently present throughout the campaign on the Apple website, and when used in

conjunction with black and white, as well as the shade of orange which is present on the watch itself, an intense contrast is formed, which is reflective of the product's robust design and durability, and assists with the justification of its high price point.

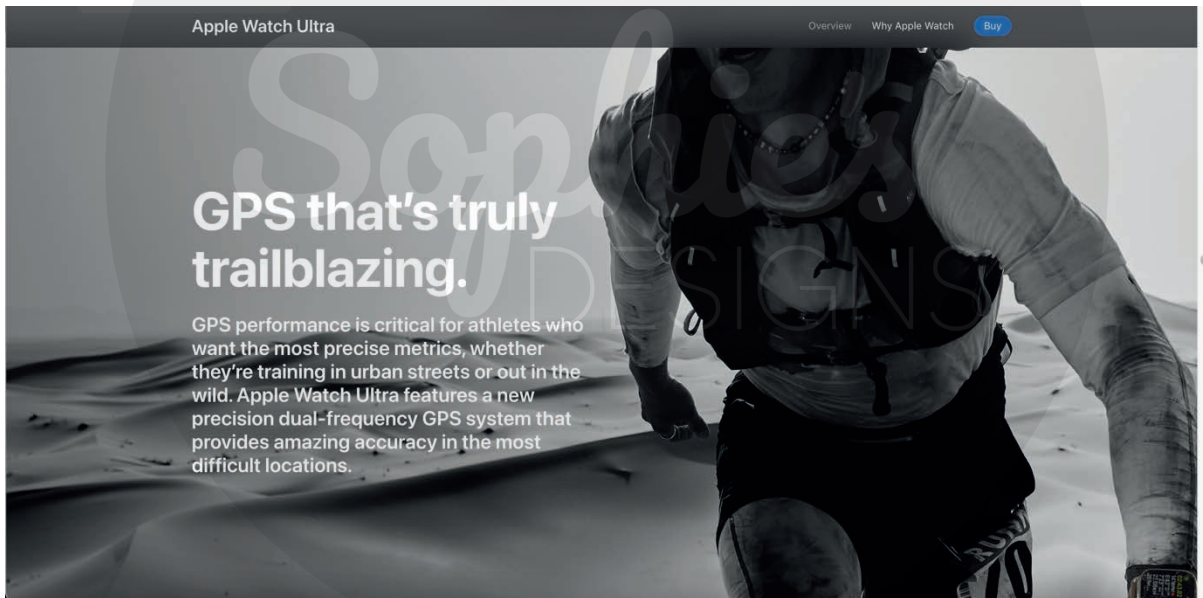


Figure. 8 - GPS performance of the Apple Watch Ultra (Apple Website, 2022)

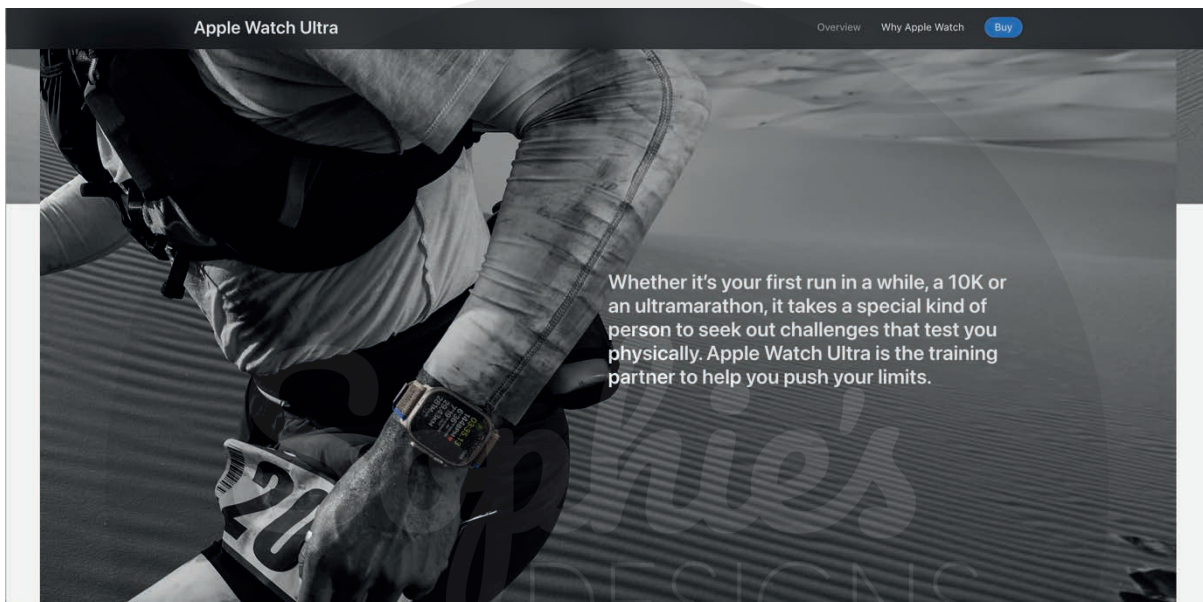


Figure. 9 - Fitness and the Apple Watch Ultra (Apple Website, 2022)



Figure. 10 - Diagram of the Apple Watch Ultra (Apple Website, 2022)

Eiseman also links grey to architecture by suggesting that grey represents “the longevity of ancient edifices, temples, and monuments – dependable, solid, and everlasting.” (Eiseman, 2017). Generally, Apple products, in particular the iMac and MacBook, are perceived as worthwhile investments due to their resistance to computer malware (particularly in comparison to their Microsoft counterparts), and their capability to withstand the stresses of demanding use, as their powerful processors can execute multiple tasks simultaneously without becoming overwhelmed. Eiseman’s connection between grey and architecture could therefore imply that Apple make use of this shade to promote the idea of their products being resistant and long-lasting.

As an organisation which initially set out to revolutionise the ways in which people viewed computers, Apple have made a monumental amount of progress in achieving their goal through diversifying into a range of new markets, e.g., portable technology, and through developing a range of health and safety technologies with significant lifestyle benefits. For instance, the Apple Watch Ultra is equipped with systems such

as crash and fall detection, blood oxygen readings, ECG monitoring, and sleep trackers. Reflecting on their use of grey, it could be argued that this may be a thoughtful way of exhibiting and honouring their highly skilled and talented workforce, and the capabilities within their team of developing such cutting-edge technology, as both Eiseman and Adams associate grey with the concepts of intelligence and wisdom. (Eiseman, 2017) (Adams, 2017).

Now that Apple has been in operation for nearly half a century, it is evident that their relationship with colour has been complex, however colour has patently been a vital component in ensuring their success. Historically, Apple ostensibly based their logos around the release of new products, and the colour of the logo would fluctuate, depending on the medium to which it was applied. Despite this generating awareness for the new release, it left the overall brand image feeling inconsistent and disharmonious, with multiple variations of the logo often appearing concurrently.

Whilst the initial multicolour logo was unique and allowed Apple to attain mass appeal, the shift to the monochromatic branding has enabled Apple to fully associate themselves with concepts such as luxury, sophistication, reliability, simplicity, and knowledge, all positive connotations which have enabled them to build an extremely loyal following. Regardless of a product's genuine value and solidity, Apple consumers are prepared to pay a premium upon seeing the branding alone, as they recognise that this equals a stylish and high-performing device which will meet their expectations.

To some, it may seem incongruous that a brand which is consistently striving to innovate has adhered to traditional colour connotations and has a monochromatic corporate identity. However, it is important to remember that Apple has experienced

a prolonged period of change and development before reaching the conclusion that a black, white, and grey palette is the most accurate reflection of their desire for simplicity and minimalism across the entirety of their business operations. This monochromatic, 'less is more' approach adopted by Apple within their corporate identity has proved to be a sublime choice for ensuring their prosperity within the technological industry, as it ties in exquisitely with their products and service offering. When compared to their previous branding, the monochromatic colour scheme appears stronger and more secure, as it works seamlessly across all mediums. From physical packaging, product design, and in-store signage to digital channels such as the Apple website, television advertisements, and operating systems, there is now a true element of cohesiveness and unification across the Apple branding.

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Chapter Two: Sunshine in the Supermarket Aisle

Whilst the use of monochrome is effective in Apple's circumstances, their view that a minimalistic approach to aesthetic matters is superior could potentially be viewed as antiquated and out of touch with more contemporary branding practices. As the economy changes and competition increases, creative professionals working in alternative industries are beginning to administer colour in refreshing and imaginative ways, to challenge colour stereotypes and differentiate themselves from other similar brands within the market.

In 2022, British supermarket chain ASDA commissioned Leeds and Hull-based design agency OurCreative to “shake up the category of budget items and re-invent the visual language for opening price point design.” (OurCreative, © 2022). ASDA was previously marketing two separate budget offerings - Smart Price and Farm Stores, however the appearance of the Farm Stores branding had promoted an incorrect impression of being a higher quality range. To eliminate this inconsistency and confusion, and to modernise the uninspiring Smart Price packaging, OurCreative were invited by ASDA to “reposition their Smart Price and Farm Stores range into one distinctive and cohesive brand.” (OurCreative, © 2022).



Figure. 11 - ASDA Smart Price Products (2022)



Figure. 12 - ASDA Farm Stores Label (s.d.)

The requirement for this rebrand had urgently arisen due to the progressive cost-of-living crisis which originated in mid-2021, just as the UK economy was reopening following the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus far, this has been a turbulent period of recovery due to several contributing factors, with one of these being the onset of the energy crisis. Rising costs and global shortages of fossil fuels and electricity has led to a steady increase in the cost of utility bills for UK residents. Furthermore, UK inflation rates recently increased to 10.1% in November 2022, a significantly higher figure than the Government's target of 2%. (Bank of England, 2022). Additionally, the closure of factories in Asia due to outbreaks of COVID-19 has caused a prolonged global shortage of semiconductors found in common consumer technology and within vehicles, which has inevitably had a negative impact on both the technological and automotive industries in terms of their ability to manage supply and meet demand. The price of shipping large containers has also

risen, and because of this, importing commodities such as building supplies has proved unfavourable for the construction and timber sectors.

As a result of climate change, the summer of 2022 within Europe was the warmest recorded in history. (Galey, 2022). Extreme heatwaves and severe droughts across Europe saw farmers enduring produce declining on the vine or ripening prematurely, resulting in reduced yields of healthy crop. This adverse environmental impact on farming is undoubtedly an additional contributor to the inflated cost of food items, and food shortages within the UK.

Such economic tensions have escalated since the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine which commenced on 24th February 2022. As both Russia and Ukraine are some of the largest exporters of sunflower oil in the world, the war has caused significant supply chain disruption, which has led to increased prices within the agricultural and food markets. In other industries, companies have ceased operations within Russia in order to condemn the invasion, whilst others have temporarily closed their Ukraine-based factories due to the conflict. This has caused further disruption to global energy markets and the provision of resources such as coal, fuel, and gas.

Prior to the rebrand, ASDA surveyed their customers to obtain their views on this period of economic adversity. Sam Dickson, ASDA's Vice President of Brand and Propositions stated, "Nine out of ten of our customers have told us they are concerned about the cost-of-living crisis, with 44% of them saying they're actively looking for ways to make their grocery budget go further." (Nazir, 2022).

Towards the end of May 2022, OurCreative unveiled their answer to ASDA's brief, and commenced the rollout of the products within ASDA stores, with items gradually

replacing their Smart Price and Farm Stores equivalents. Titled *Just Essentials*, the new value range contains almost three-hundred items, including fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, frozen and cupboard staples, and household toiletries, all encased in vibrant yellow packaging that is decorated with bold typography and playful line illustrations.



Figure. 13 - A Sample of Just Essentials Products.

OurCreative believed that the white packaging which was used for the existing Smart Price range “held negative brand perceptions, with customers feeling ashamed to buy into the range.” (OurCreative, © 2022). On their website, they state that the new range will bring “an end to consumers hiding value brands in the bottom of their trolleys” (OurCreative, © 2022), and that customers should feel proud of the fact that *Just Essentials* enables them to stretch their budget. (OurCreative, © 2022).

The decision to use yellow as the primary colour for this range is one which can be explored in significant detail. Within *The Complete Color Harmony: Pantone Edition*,

Eiseman describes yellow as “reflective and radiant” (Eiseman, 2017) and “the symbolic colour of hope, happiness, and good cheer.” (Eiseman, 2017). As yellow is the most visible colour identified in Newton’s spectrum, the *Just Essentials* range is therefore easy to spot on shelves at a distance, which streamlines the shopping experience for the budget-conscious customer, as there is no need for them to spend time comparing products and searching for the cheaper option; instead, just by seeing the yellow packaging alone, they are able to immediately distinguish the *Just Essentials* item as the budget-friendly product.



Figure. 14 - *Just Essentials* is easily distinguishable on the shelves.

According to Eiseman, yellow is “believed to stimulate the left side of the brain to prepare for more logical thinking, clearing the mind in order to provide the clarity for reasonable decision-making.” (Eiseman, 2017). This could imply that ASDA wishes to help consumers to shop smartly, in a way that enables them to remain within

budget. Due to the cost-of-living crisis, shopping for groceries is now regarded as a worrying and overwhelming experience for many people who are struggling to make ends meet. ASDA and OurCreative may have therefore opted for yellow packaging as a way of relaxing the minds of their customers and helping them to make rational money-saving choices, thus alleviating some of this pressure.

Eiseman also comments on yellow's joyful nature and how it is viewed as forthcoming and friendly, and as a colour which energises and enriches. (Eiseman, 2017). OurCreative and ASDA have strived to break down the stereotypical opinions of value products and eliminate any negative connotations surrounding them, through associating the concept of budget shopping with a colour that has numerous traditional positive connections.

When asked about the rationale behind OurCreative's choice of yellow for the rebrand during an interview conducted for the purposes of this dissertation (See Appendix 1), Sara Pollard, OurCreative's Account Director, responded in support of this analysis through stating "our joyful sunny yellow breaks the predictable white language of visual design, but is still bold and distinctive enough to be found easily throughout a busy store environment." (See Appendix 2).



Figure. 15 - Just Essentials Products.

Like the unprecedented multicolour stripes within the Apple logo, which instantly captivated attention, invoked curiosity, and allowed Apple to stand out from the competition as a futuristic, boundary-pushing technology firm, the bright yellow was chosen to increase the visibility of ASDA's value offering amid the multitude of comparable ranges provided by rival supermarkets. Similar to the former ASDA Smart Price range, many budget ranges supplied by alternative retailers e.g., Waitrose and Morrisons contain soulless, understated background colours which give rise to a dismissive emotional response from consumers. In contrast, the use of yellow within *Just Essentials* enables ASDA to challenge this long-standing trend, through promoting a contemporary and refreshing outlook on value products.



Figure. 16 – The ASDA packaging stands out in comparison to value offerings from competing supermarkets including the Essential range from Waitrose and the Morrisons Savers range.

As the products entered ASDA stores throughout the summer, the range received a predominantly positive reaction. *Just Essentials* attained viral recognition via online news outlets and social media applications such as TikTok, with multiple creators uploading videos which highlighted the vast savings that can be made when switching to the yellow packaged products, generating thousands of views and 'likes' on the platform. As a result of this, shelves were cleared faster than they could be replenished, leaving many stores with limited stock of the range. In fact, in

September 2022, ASDA admitted that they had underestimated the demand for the range and were forced to place a temporary restriction on *Just Essentials* products, limiting purchases to a maximum of three of each item.



Figure. 17 – One of the many depleted *Just Essentials* shelving areas within the ASDA Superstore in Tilbury, Essex, as customers rushed to their local stores to sample the new range (August 2022).

Nevertheless, despite its popularity and its capability to take the internet by storm, the colour of the *Just Essentials* packaging sparked a controversial public debate. Some customers claimed that the yellow packaging is ‘embarrassing poorer families’, with others believing that the design acts as a ‘poverty marker’ (Nichols, 2022) and draws unnecessary attention to those who are struggling financially. They argued that filling a basket with brightly coloured, ‘patronising’ items indicates a lower disposable income, which may result in customers feeling uncomfortable or fearful of being perceived negatively by fellow shoppers.



Figure. 18 – A shopping basket filled with Just Essentials products.

When questioned about OurCreative’s view of this adverse reaction, Pollard stated “This is not a public response; it is a very small minority, and it is disappointing that this has been exaggerated by the media. The majority of public comments are very positive.” (See Appendix 2). She confirmed that “ASDA are very proud of the range” and expressed that “customers should not feel ashamed to buy value products.” (See Appendix 2). Her comments are supported by her colleague Kim Van Elkan, OurCreative’s co-owner and managing director, who branded the controversy a “storm in a yellow tea cup” (Bamford, 2022) in an article written for the website *Design Week*, and believes that the negative comments are temporary and will diminish when people “change their mindsets.” (Bamford, 2022). She also expressed that many of ASDA’s customers have praised the packaging for its ability to signify the budget-friendly products. (Bamford, 2022).

Just Essentials ignited a debate among creative industry professionals in relation to the appropriateness of the yellow packaging. In an article published on the website *Marketing Beat*, logo and brand identity designer Karl McCarthy praised the range for being “lively, fun, and energetic” (Nichols, 2022), but agreed that it “draws unwanted attention to something that a lot of people feel embarrassed about.” (Nichols, 2022). Similarly, Anastasiya Plocco K., brand manager of The Fragrance Shop feels that the controversy “highlights the importance of taking into account customer perception before making such a drastic change” (Nichols, 2022), even suggesting that ASDA should revert to the previous design for the range, to avoid any further controversy and potential loss of custom.

On the contrary, other professionals have been willing to embrace a more objective view of the rebrand. During the third episode of the *untalented* podcast delivered by the creative agency UNKNOWN on 30th August 2022, the presenters commended ASDA as one of the most proactive UK supermarkets in terms of helping local communities through making regular donations to charities and foodbanks (UNKNOWN, 2022), advocating ASDA as a brand which genuinely cares for the welfare of its customer base. In a world currently full of economic pressure and uncertainty, it is clear that the intentions for this rebrand were solely positive; ASDA and OurCreative wished to utilise the yellow to instil feelings of joy, optimism, and hope that there is a light at the end of the tunnel for those struggling with living costs, through ensuring that families can still “enjoy nutritious food, no matter their budget.” (Nazir, 2022).

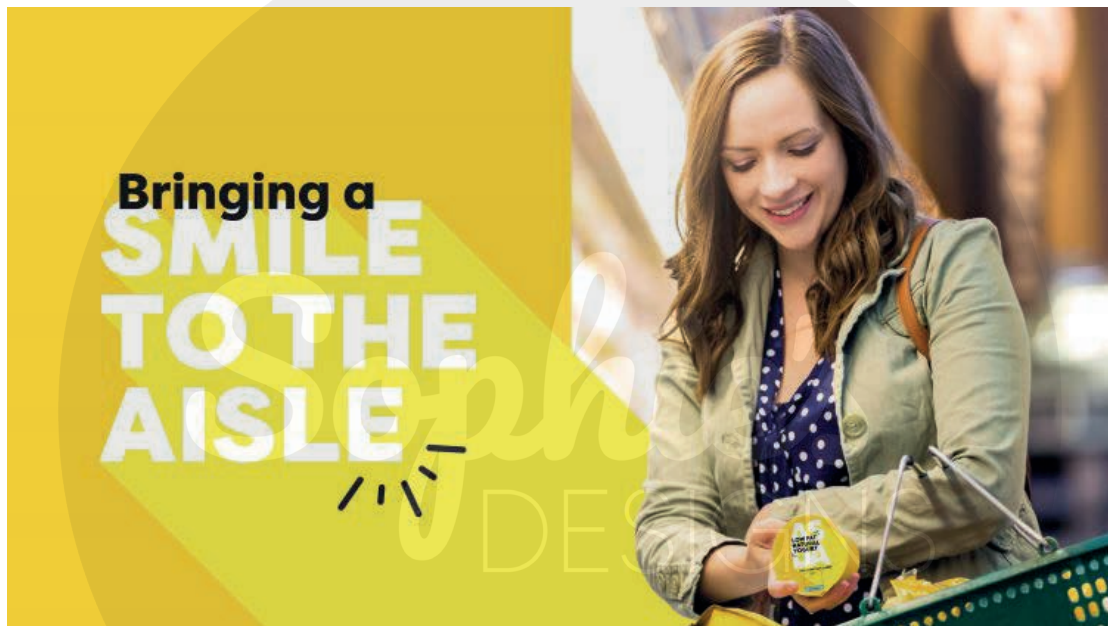


Figure. 19 – The marketing for *Just Essentials* promotes feelings of optimism and positivity to customers who are struggling with the increasing cost of living.

Ultimately, the *Just Essentials* rebrand is an epitome of how deep-rooted stereotypical associations with colour can be indirectly altered through socio-economic and contextual factors. Hypothetically, if the rebrand had been introduced prior to the pandemic and the current climate of economic instability, shortages, and political conflict, it is highly unlikely that the bright yellow packaging would have been characterised by some as a 'poverty marker'. It is the context in which the brand has been introduced which has unconsciously fostered this viewpoint. This therefore emphasises the importance of conducting a prior comprehensive investigation of the context in which a design will be situated, and whether there are any external factors which may contribute to perceptual errors in relation to the chosen colour scheme. Such analysis is paramount to ensuring that the colour palette conveys the intended ideas and messages to the target market. Regardless of this, it is important to remember that the criticism surrounding *Just Essentials* is simply the view of a small minority. Currently, the range appears to be delivering on its promises, whilst acting as a driving force behind ASDA's overall growth, with the website *The Grocer*

reporting that an additional four-hundred and seventeen thousand customers passed through its doors in the twelve-week period up to the w/e 2nd October in comparison to last year, with an increase of 4.5% in grocery sales. (Foster-Collins, 2022). As part of this, the number of shoppers purchasing one *Just Essentials* item as part of their shopping increased “from 33% to nearly two thirds in the space of one month.” (Leyland, 2022).

ASDA and OurCreative’s contemporary rebrand is a high-quality example of how the unconventional application of colour can be influential in eliciting new emotional responses and breaking down traditional barriers. The bright yellow packaging allows for an easily recognisable, unified range, and the high-quality design reframes budget shopping with feelings of positivity and dignity, “bringing a smile to the aisle.” (OurCreative, © 2022). For ASDA, this innovative move has unquestionably allowed them to surface as a leading pioneer, empowering them to pave the way forward into a new era of supermarket value branding.

Sophie's
DESIGNS

Chapter Three: Marketing, Advertising, Disruption, and Colour

It is not only the technology and grocery retailing sectors that have witnessed the emergence of an innovative organisation which challenges conventional design practices and strives to revitalise their industry, via the unique application of colour. Within the last four years, such a strategy has also been noted within the events industry, specifically through the arrival of the unprecedented marketing festival - MAD//Fest London.

In May 2018, events marketing specialists Dan Brain and Ian Houghton convened in a pub to enjoy a beverage. Their conversation quickly turned to business, during which they contemplated the nature of traditional in-person marketing conferences and tradeshows, which at the time, were dominating the sector. They collaboratively agreed that such events had seemingly become entirely void of inspiration, energy, and creativity (Webex Events, © 2016 - 2022), and offered minimal value to those in attendance, with guests departing with the odd stationery freebie, and little else.

Brain and Houghton asked each other what would happen if they created their own marketing event “that packs a punch with no-nonsense, relevant content” (Webex Events, © 2016 - 2022), and was a space that “transforms the traditional concept of an event into an immersive experience that generates excitement, fosters connection and drives ROI” (Return on Investment). (Webex Events, © 2016 - 2022). They identified a gap in the market for a marketing, advertising, and disruptive technology festival with a human-centred approach and a unique attendee experience, which would be full of inspiration, innovation, food, and fun. Thus, three pints later, MAD//Fest was born. Brain and Houghton subsequently resigned from their jobs, accumulated some funds, and within just five and a half months brought their vision

to life, with the first MAD//Fest event taking place on the 28th and 29th November of that year, at the Old Truman Brewery in Shoreditch, London. Since its establishment, MAD//Fest has gone from strength to strength, firmly positioning itself as “the UK’s boldest and most distinctive marketing event.” (MAD//Fest, s.d.).



Figure. 20 - Ian Houghton (left) and Dan Brain (right) speaking at MAD//Fest 2021.

The arrangement of the event is a world away from the dreary conference halls and trade centres which marketers had previously become accustomed to, and which Brain and Houghton yearned to migrate from. Upon arrival, guests are greeted by an abundance of street food vendors, a pop-up pub with an unlimited supply of alcoholic drinks, cooperative games e.g., foosball which foster friendly competition and ample networking opportunities, coffee stalls with coffee topped with latte art of their own faces, and miniature lounges for relaxing and networking.



Figure. 21 – Attendees networking at MAD//Fest 2021.

Throughout the three days, marketers from across the globe unite to exchange ideas, introduce new innovations, and network with fellow industry influencers. (Webex Events, © 2021). Four premium stages host continuous speeches and keynotes, which are meticulously prepared and delivered by hand-picked, prestigious brand marketers, influential executives, and media leaders, offering attendees opportunities for direct engagement with some of the world's leading brands. This year's portfolio of speakers included Peter Markey, Chief Marketing Officer at Boots UK, Lisa McDowell, Brand Director at Ocado Retail, and Peter Zillig, Marketing Director at Ford of Europe, to name but a few. On the final afternoon, the event concludes via the MAD//Carnival, which includes a headline DJ set, and opportunities for attendees to strengthen their new connections, enjoy live music, and soak up the celebratory atmosphere at a five-hour industry party.



Figure. 22 - Lisa McDowell, Brand Director at Ocado Retail speaking on the Hexagon Stage at MAD//Fest 2022.



Figure. 23 - Guests relaxing at the MAD//Carnival party on day three of MAD//Fest 2022.

MAD//Fest is highly regarded by industry professionals and has received glowing testimonials from leaders such as Mary Keane-Dawson, the Global CEO of Takumi, who labelled the event as “the Coachella of marketing events” (MAD//Fest, s.d.) and Wally Brill, the Head of Conversation Design at Google, who described it as being “like Disneyland for brands.” (MAD//Fest, s.d.).

Houghton confirmed in a video uploaded to the website for Webex Events that the brand “doubles every year in revenue and is always a sell-out event to delegates.” (Webex Events, © 2016 - 2022). In 2021, whilst the ongoing restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic were impeding the delivery of many in-person events, Brain and Houghton expertly adapted MAD//Fest and operated using a hybrid model, a strategic move which ultimately led to a surge in the growth, attendance, and exposure of the event. Four thousand people congregated at the Old Truman Brewery, with another four thousand attending virtually through a livestream, tuning in from all over the world. Across the entire event, over twenty-one thousand networking connections were formed. After the triumph of engaging their audience with the hybrid model, MAD//Fest continued to offer this option of virtual attendance for their 2022 event which took place from 5th – 7th July. This year, MAD//Fest recorded over eleven thousand registered attendees over the three-day period, with approximately seven thousand people attending physically and another two thousand joining via the online livestream.

This immense growth which MAD//Fest has experienced is naturally a result of its trailblazing attendee experience which cannot be found elsewhere within the marketing industry. However, it is a combination of this experience alongside a set of powerful branding principles which has fully enabled Brain and Houghton to develop their winning formula. In respect of MAD//Fest’s corporate identity, the brand utilises

vibrant yellow and a striking hot pink as its signature colours, which bring life and excitement to every interaction between the team and their audience, and are reflective of the festival's dynamic attendee experience. (Webex Events, © 2016 - 2022). Whether applied together, or used alongside black and/or white, MAD//Fest's uncustomary application of colour instantaneously captivates audiences and conveys the notion of this festival being an event which is quite the opposite of an ordinary marketing conference.



Figure. 24 - The Hexagonal MAD//Fest Logo and their 'No Guts No Glory' graphic – the theme of MAD//Fest 2022.

A comprehensive study of MAD//Fest's digital marketing strategies and techniques was conducted via the undertaking of a work placement in February 2022 with Legra Marketing, a marketing agency based in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, founded and owned by Steve Outridge, an events marketing specialist working in partnership with Brain and Houghton to promote the festival. Completing this placement enabled the acquisition of a first-hand insight into the ethos of MAD//Fest and their approach to business, which is built upon themes of inspiration, innovation, ideas, celebration, and fun, with an informal, exciting, and optimistic tone of voice to match. The

placement also facilitated an evaluation of how bright yellow and hot pink play a key role in enabling Brain and Houghton to articulate such themes and emotions to their audience.

Conventionally, yellow is regarded as an energising colour which generates feelings of warmth, excitement, and happiness, through stimulating the release of serotonin, a chemical messenger within the brain that is responsible for a range of bodily functions, including mood regulation and energy expenditure. As claimed by the website *Colors Explained*, the colour yellow is a fitting choice when used within the branding of a networking event such as MAD//Fest as it inspires and encourages communication. (Colors Explained, © 2019 - 2022). The capability of yellow to evoke physiological and psychological responses in audiences, which mirror the positive concepts, behaviours, and emotions associated with the MAD//Fest experience, make it an advantageous choice of colour for the brand.

When yellow is paired with black, a striking, high-visibility contrast is formed which is generally regarded as a warning mechanism and a means of highlighting potential hazards and obstacles (Ambrose and Harris, 2005), as well as poisonous substances. It is argued that this connection of black and yellow with the concept of danger stems from the natural colouring of bees, wasps, some venomous snakes, and frogs, including the yellow-banded poison dart frog. As a matter of fact, Brain and Houghton adopted their own black and yellow creature as a mascot for the festival known as the MAD//Fest bear, which Outridge likens to Aleksandr The Meerkat, the mascot created for the 'Compare the Meerkat' advertising campaign which was launched by the insurance price comparison website Compare The Market in 2009. (See Appendix 4).



Figure. 25 - The MAD//Fest bear.

The MAD//Fest bear is consistently featured throughout the branding for the festival, appearing within physical mediums at the event itself, e.g., on signage and guest passes, as well as digitally across the entirety of MAD//Fest’s social media presence. Its star-embellished sunglasses, sharp canine teeth, and yellow and black fur make it an attention-grabbing, light-hearted, and unconventional visual symbol, and the true embodiment of the MAD//Fest experience.

Within the MAD//Fest charter which is located on the brand’s website, Brain and Houghton denounce the marketing event industry, expressing the belief that it has failed to move with the times, and “continues to pump out boring trade shows.”

(MAD//Fest, s.d.). Consequently, it could be inferred that the combination of yellow and black across the MAD//Fest branding and particularly within the design of the

MAD//Fest bear, which is invariably illustrated assuming a roaring pose, is representative of their own warning to the competition – one that indicates the need for change within the industry, and one which pronounces MAD//Fest as a key initiator of this change.



Figure. 26 - The MAD//Fest bear is incorporated within the design of on-screen graphics and physical signage at the event.

MAD//Fest strives to oppose the stereotypical views of traditional marketing conferences with the intention of revitalising the approach to networking events. It may be argued that through Brain and Houghton's decision to use the colour pink, they have also indirectly challenged the historical attitudes towards this colour. In the past, the colour pink was frequently connected with the notion of femininity, romance, softness, and daintiness within Western cultures, however the shades chosen by MAD//Fest are radical, distinctly rebellious, and antithetical to such themes. By contrast, the hot pink conveys a strong sense of power, enabling MAD//Fest to exude an aura of confidence and be presented as a brand which functions differently, in a manner which refuses to comply with industry standards.



Figure. 27 – The bright colour combination facilitates a unique stage design which is like no other within the industry.

Both the vibrant yellow and the hot pink radiate warmth, which is symbolic of the summer season in which MAD//Fest takes place and enables the event to bear a

resemblance to a summer party, rather than be associated with the bureaucratic and archaic world of corporate marketing events. When speaking about the appeal of MAD//Fest, Houghton explained that guests were initially attracted to the show as it made them feel as if “they were going to do something fun on the weekend” (Webex Events, © 2016 - 2022) which “just happened to be surrounded by business people as opposed to their friends.” (Webex Events, © 2016 - 2022). Houghton stated that this “made a big difference in people’s emotional reaction to the event and how they enjoyed that space and how they relaxed.” (Webex Events, © 2016 - 2022). The exciting colour palette plays a key role in the conceptualisation of these feelings and ideas as it conveys a high degree of approachability and playfulness, which appeals to those who are searching for a unique experience that exudes excitement and innovation, with plentiful networking opportunities.



Figure. 28 – The festival map at MAD//Fest 2022.

The amalgamation of yellow and pink fails to adhere to any of the colour relationship concepts which are derived from established colour models and systems, including Newton's colour wheel and the multiple variants of this which followed thereafter. Today, many organisations choose to utilise the principles of colour harmony through selecting a palette which is based upon a colour relationship such as complementary, analogous, or triadic, which can either soothe or excite the eye. MAD//Fest has succeeded in achieving the latter, without abiding by any of these traditional rules, which further reinforces this association between the MAD//Fest brand and the concepts of non-conformity and defiance.



Figure. 29 – Eye-catching signage at MAD//Fest 2022.

During the period of preparatory research for this dissertation, an interview was conducted with Brain to obtain an intricate understanding of his and Houghton's thought process behind the development of the MAD//Fest branding. (See Appendix 3). When asked to describe the rationale behind his and Houghton's decision to incorporate a pink and yellow colour combination, Brain stated, "We wanted the

brand to cut through and be distinctive against our competition. Pink and yellow is a statement, it's not a colour combination you'd expect from an industry event, where the branding is often dull, unimaginative, and corporate.” (See Appendix 5). He subsequently explained that their use of colour “was intended to be brash, loud, fun, daring and fresh in a sea of very safely branded competitor events.” (See Appendix 5). He added that the striking colours help to “communicate the message that MAD//Fest is new, fresh and not just another event from a major event company that has a branding template for shows across multiple industries.” (See Appendix 5).



Figure. 30 - Guests arriving at MAD//Fest 2022.

Interestingly, this is another instance in which a colour palette has been selected for the purposes of breaking through and increasing the visibility of a brand within a crowded market. MAD//Fest’s application of vivid colours and their desire to be noticed among a multitude of rival events is practically identical to OurCreative’s

motivation for implementing bright yellow across the ASDA *Just Essentials* rebrand, as a means of distinguishing ASDA's value offering from those of other competing supermarkets. However, although both brands adopted a collective rationale in terms of their application of the colour yellow, OurCreative chose the colour to promote the least costly line of ASDA products, whereas the MAD//Fest yellow advertises a premium experience, with the cost of a single ticket to the event exceeding five hundred pounds. This is therefore also an example of how a colour can be applied and regarded differently within contrasting industries at opposite extremes of the market for disposable income.

MAD//Fest's unique approach to colour can be explored through the work of the highly influential polymath, poet, and playwright Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Born in 1749 in Frankfurt, Germany, Goethe is considered a notable theorist in respect of colour theory, as his contribution to the field positioned him as one of the first figures to publicly refute the widely respected scientific ideas which had been proposed by Newton during the 17th century. After conducting his own personal experiments with glass prisms and discovering additional colours which had not been recorded by Newton, Goethe challenged Newton's theory that colour was solely derived from the refraction of white light, instead hypothesising that colour is formed at the boundary at which darkness and light meet. He named this dualistic colour system the 'light-darkness polarity', and he believed that humans could recognise this polarity in themselves via the use of colour-related idioms, such as 'looking on the bright side', and having a 'sunny' or a 'gloomy' disposition. (Icarus Films, © 2022).

Goethe believed that Newton's purely scientific approach did not allow one to fully comprehend colour. (Adams, 2017). Rather than purely focusing on the physics of light, Goethe's research concentrated on the emotional element of colour perception,

through studying the ways in which both warm and cool colours induce psychological responses in humans. Through this exploration of the correlation between colour and emotion, Goethe postulated that colour is a subjective encounter which will be perceived differently by each person, and a phenomenon which exerts an unconscious influence on the human body, the mind, and the soul.



Figure. 31 - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1828).



Figure. 32 – Friedrich Schiller (1794).

In 1799, Goethe formulated his own colour wheel with assistance from his friend and fellow German poet Friedrich Schiller. Titled the *Temperamenten-Rose*, the diagram was built upon the principles of Humoral theory, which was developed by Hippocrates of Kos, a pioneering physician within Ancient Greek medicine, and was later developed by Claudius Galenus, or Galen, a physician, surgeon, and philosopher. Humoral theory proposed that the human body consisted of four humors which represent the cardinal fluids of yellow bile, black bile, phlegm, and blood. The unique humoral makeup within individuals varied between humans, however achieving a balance of all four humors within one's body was an indicator of strength and good health. On the contrary, imbalances caused by either a surplus or

a deficiency of a particular humor were the origins of poor health, sickness, and disease. (Harvard Library, © 2018).

In addition to this, Hippocrates and Galen offered a psychological stance to Humoral theory, through suggesting that a combination of the four humors also possessed the capacity to govern psychological disposition, personality traits, and behaviours. Each of the four humors was therefore assigned a distinct psychological temperament. The same principles of balance were applied to this cognitive component of the theory. It was proposed that achieving a balance of the four humors would lead to positive emotional wellbeing, and that an imbalance would result in the onset of mental illness.

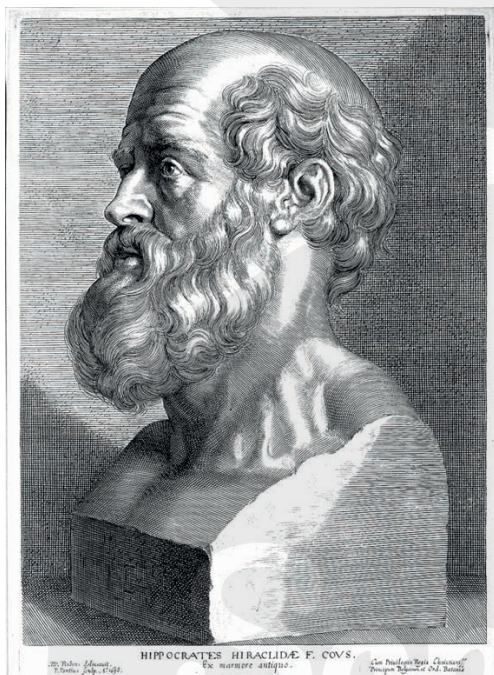


Figure. 33 - Bust of Hippocrates (1638).



Figure. 34 – An 18th century engraving of Galen.

The humor of yellow bile was associated with a choleric personality. It was argued that an excess of yellow bile in the body would transpire via an individual exhibiting confident, highly competitive, ambitious, and authoritarian behaviour, and easily

becoming angered or ill-tempered. (The Colour Works, 2011). The second identified disposition was melancholic, which was paired with black bile. Individuals of this nature were described as quiet, serious, considerate, and reserved people, who are sensitive and empathetic. They strive for perfectionism and display highly self-critical behaviour, which can make them prone to suffering from symptoms of depressive disorders. (The Colour Works, 2011).

Phlegm, the third humor, was combined with a phlegmatic temperament. A phlegmatic person is seen as reliable, compassionate, and as someone with a high degree of dependability, who is surrounded by loyal friends and colleagues. They are relaxed, unemotional, and self-content, however this can unfavourably lead to them being perceived as indolent and resistant to change. (The Colour Works, 2011).

Lastly, blood was amalgamated with a sanguine disposition. Sanguine individuals display extroverted, thrill-seeking personalities and adopt an infectiously optimistic, energetic, and carefree approach to life. They are extremely sociable and thrive when in the company of others. However, their constant desire for adventure can often lead to reckless, impulsive behaviour. (BetterHelp, 2022).

Through the *Temperamenten-Rose*, Goethe and Schiller established a visual analogy between colour and the four temperaments associated with the bodily humors, extrapolating further to specific occupations and characteristics, which they assigned to each group. For instance, cyan, blue, and violet were linked to the phlegmatic disposition, which was further connected to the occupations of teachers, speakers, and historians.

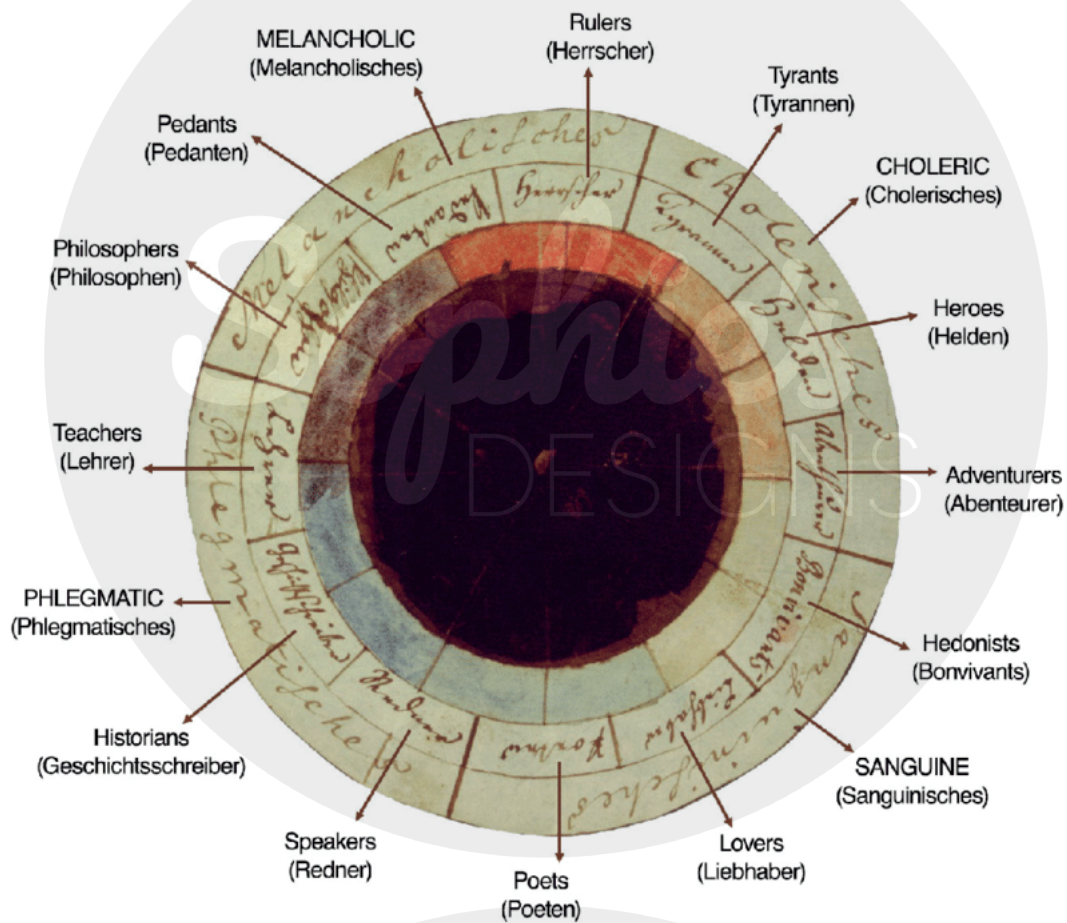


Figure. 35 - The Temperamenten-Rose

The principles of the *Temperamenten-Rose* and its personification of colour provide a fascinating justification for Brain and Houghton’s decision to use the colour yellow within their branding. Within the diagram, yellow is connected to both the choleric and sanguine temperaments. If one considers the various attributes which are associated with these, they are remarkably congruous with MAD//Fest’s brand personality and the characteristics of their target audience. According to Goethe and Schiller, a choleric personality is aligned with an adventure-seeking persona, and exhibiting a sanguine disposition is associated with following the ethical theory of hedonism, which is centred around the pursuit of pleasure, self-indulgence, and enjoyment. (See Figure. 35). The sanguine character is also linked to being a bon

vivant, a sociable individual who has cultivated and refined tastes, and who enjoys overindulging in good food and wine at restaurants and parties. (See Figure. 35). MAD//Fest's unique, captivating, enjoyable, and dynamic attendee experience, alongside the limitless supply of premium food and drink on offer, make the event an exemplary destination for those of either temperament.

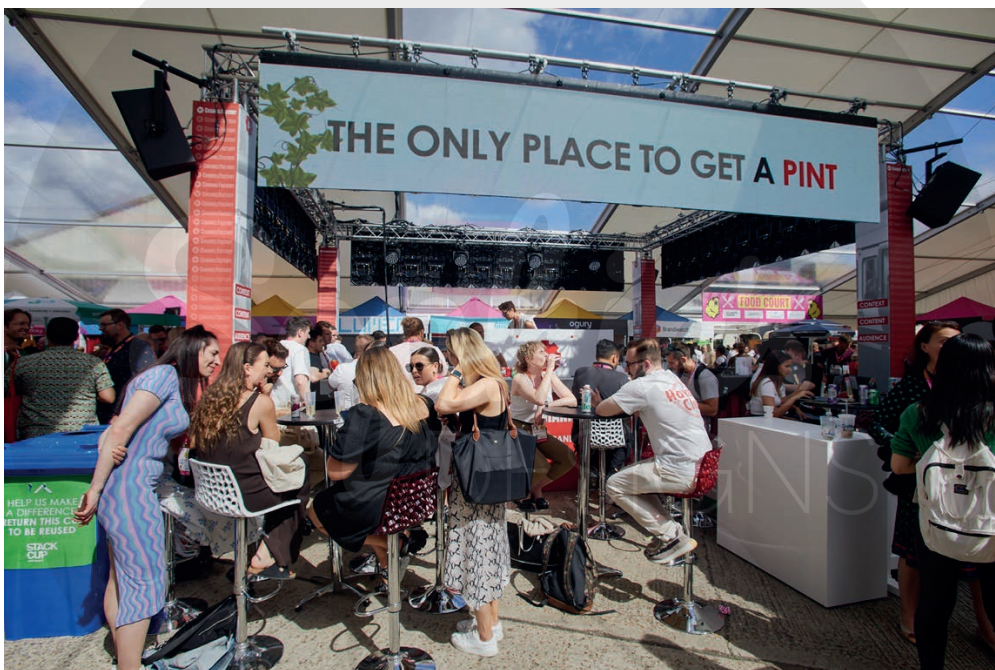


Figure. 36 – Guests soaking up the atmosphere at MAD//Fest.

When speaking about the use of yellow within the MAD//Fest branding, Brain stated, “As our event is heavily focused on creativity and innovation, choosing a colour like yellow also made sense due to its connotations with creative thinking.” (See Appendix 5). Individuals who possess a sanguine temperament are believed to be some of the most creative people in society. (MacDonald, 2022). Brain and Houghton have seemingly acknowledged this through selecting the colour yellow which according to Goethe, has a deep-rooted, emotional connection to people of this disposition.

As individuals, Brain and Houghton also display both choleric and sanguine qualities. Intolerant of boredom and irritated by the routine, repetitive experiences, and monotony within their industry, they took an immense risk, resigning from their jobs to embark on a new endeavour. Their optimistic, confident, and venturesome sanguine personalities are a fundamental component of their brand, as they continuously seek ways to enhance the MAD//Fest experience in a way which surpasses their offering from the preceding year.

The *Temperamenten-Rose* was drawn “during an excited (and inebriated) exchange about colour” (Loske, 2019) between Goethe and Schiller. The nature of its development bears an uncanny resemblance to the circumstances surrounding the origin of MAD//Fest, which Brain and Houghton developed after consuming a few pints, and questioning one another in a pub. It is simply remarkable how this late 18th century representation is applicable to the modern-day application of colour, notwithstanding that it was based on principles of medieval medicine, alongside the movement of Romanticism, which emphasised darkness, the emotional, and the subjective.

Nevertheless, Goethe's observation of the relationship between colour and emotion remains ever prevalent within contemporary branding teams. Gavin Day, Design Director at Stereo Creative, a London-based digital creative agency, was interviewed for the purposes of this dissertation, to gain an overview of the perception of colour within a design firm. Stereo Creative has a prestigious client list that includes brands such as Nike, Spotify, H&M, Converse, and the BBC. During the interview, Day stated that "the one thing that connects all colour choices is emotion – colour is the emotional driver of any piece of design." (See Appendix 7). He continued:

"Colour immediately communicates the feel and impact of work — even if you can't read the language, the colour palette carries a lot of information about the fundamental aspects of the project like target audience, the sector, the price, the conceptual intent etc. So we start with the emotions we want to communicate and work backwards from there." (See Appendix 7).

The interrelation between colour and emotion is therefore of critical importance to Stereo Creative, as emotion is the principal element which is assessed at the very outset of a project, and is the pivotal factor governing all of their decisions in relation to colour.

During the preliminary interview with Brain, he explained that as the event is located within Shoreditch, "bright colours combined with industrial design are a key component of the physical look and feel of MAD//Fest." (See Appendix 5). "It's an area that is synonymous with creativity, innovation, and startups, so it makes sense to use colours that reflect the audience for MAD//Fest as well as the local area" (See Appendix 5), he continued. Selecting a colour palette which not only conveys the intended messages and invokes the appropriate emotional responses but is also

emblematic of the environment in which the festival takes place, substantiates the meticulous cognitive process behind the creation of the MAD//Fest corporate identity.

When MAD//Fest was launched in 2018, Brain and Houghton were operating with a limited marketing budget, which presented unfavourable circumstances for the small start-up, especially as they were competing against well-established, large-scale events with significant financial reserves for advertising. However, four years on, Brain and Houghton have evidently overcome all these obstacles through the creation of their distinctive branding, proving that when applied appropriately, colour can be a powerful catalyst in propelling the expansion and success of an idea. When reflecting on the period since MAD//Fest's inception, in truth, there was no need for Brain and Houghton to rely on expensive advertising means; their organic growth is simply the result of the combination of their colourful corporate identity and their unique attendee experience.



Figure. 37 – Picnic tables with branded parasols are a key feature of the relaxation and networking areas at MAD//Fest.

To summarise, colour has evidently played an integral role in enabling MAD//Fest to establish themselves as a trailblazer within the marketing event industry. The combination of bright yellow and hot pink is of paramount importance to Brain and Houghton as these colours alone instantly communicate MAD//Fest's mission, vision, intentions, identity, and overall personality to the audience, enabling them to powerfully shape the audience's impression of the brand, whilst simultaneously fostering brand recognition.



Figure. 38 - An illustrated poster displayed at MAD//Fest 2019.

The MAD//Fest experience aspires to bring about positive psychological emotions, and this is clearly reflected within the festival's branding and colour palette. In choosing yellow and pink, Brain and Houghton have explored far beyond the stereotypical associations with these colours, carefully selecting them for their ability to communicate their mission, distinguish themselves from the crowd, connect emotionally with their audience, and resonate with the overall spirit of the brand and the guest experience.

Alongside the positive reaction to the festival itself, the receptive response from guests to the visual aesthetic of MAD//Fest authenticates the belief that the colour palette is the true epitome of the brand. Within the interview with Brain, he emphasised that "The vast majority of people love our identity and bold colour choices, especially when combined with distinctive, offbeat and light-hearted copy" (See Appendix 5), which the brand is also known for. In true MAD//Fest fashion, Brain added:

"MAD//Fest probably isn't the right show for people who prefer to see life in grey and prefer a more corporate style. Ultimately we don't care if our branding isn't for everyone. We would rather it be loved by the people who will enjoy our festival and help us to grab attention when people have plenty of other events to choose from." (See Appendix 5).

Unquestionably, Brain and Houghton place the audience at the heart of their brand, continuously tailoring their offering to fulfil their requirements. Through their powerful visual identity, they have defied all industry expectations, delivering a unique offering which is disparate from the traditional marketing events within the industry. The vivid colours evoke optimistic emotions and portray MAD//Fest as an organisation that

wishes to integrate fun within the corporate world of marketing and revolutionise the perception of networking, through ensuring that encounters with their guests are enjoyable, and offer both professional and emotional value. The relationship which MAD//Fest has formed with their guests is a reciprocal bond, with attendees frequently praising the event, and returning to the festival year after year. With an approach of this nature and a set of accompanying powerful branding principles, MAD//Fest is truly a force to be reckoned with within the marketing event industry.



Figure. 39 – A close-up of the MAD//Fest speaker podium.

Conclusion

From this dissertation, a conclusion can be drawn that colour is one of the most powerful elements within modern and contemporary branding. It is an extremely complex phenomenon which has played a pivotal role in moulding the identities of the three brands which were selected to underpin this body of work - Apple, *Just Essentials* by ASDA and OurCreative, and MAD//Fest London. Studying the significance of colour within the branding of a global technology provider, an everyday grocery retailer, and a bespoke event organiser respectively has allowed for a comprehensive overview of the application and perception of colour within multiple contexts, as well as the similarities and differences across the three sectors which have been explored.

The three chosen brands are diametrically opposite, in terms of their motives, objectives, the markets in which they operate, and the people they serve. Apple functions on a global scale, developing technology which enhances work and leisure, whereas ASDA and MAD//Fest are unique to the UK, with the former targeting households and families and the latter delivering an event for those working in the marketing and advertising professions. However, they all share a collective approach of embracing colours with a high degree of contrast and visibility within their branding. The monochromatic identity adopted by Apple, the bright yellow palette incorporated within *Just Essentials*, and the striking yellow and pink combination utilised by MAD//Fest, enables each organisation to distinguish their unique product or service offering from those of their competitors, and stand out within their crowded markets. Applying colour for such purposes is a recurring noteworthy theme across this dissertation.

One can also deduce that colour is strongly connected to human emotion. From studying Goethe's research into the link between colour and the four temperaments associated with Humoral theory, it can be inferred that an individual's preferences towards a particular colour may be a result of their psychological disposition. Further variations in perception can be influenced by temporal trends, socio-economic variables, and deep-rooted stereotypical connotations with a particular shade. This information is indispensable to individuals who are working within the field of branding and marketing.

From conducting interviews with a selection of the professionals behind the creation of the visual identities of two of the focal brands, an insight has also been obtained in respect of their personal reasoning and thought processes governing their decisions in relation to colour. Overall, this has provided a unique perspective of the ways in which colour is strategically utilised to communicate various messages, generate brand recognition, and establish strong and long-lasting emotional connections with a target audience. The phenomenon of colour carries endless potential, and when utilised suitably, it can be a driving force in ensuring the successful emergence and subsequent prosperity of a brand.

Sophie's
DESIGNS