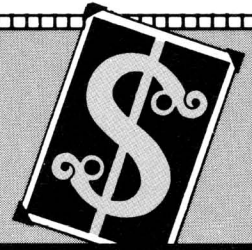


MERCHANDISING



Color improves your ads if it's in the right places

It's a fact. Color can improve the readership of an advertisement and increase sales. But the key work is "can".

Everyone wants to get their money's worth. The problem for some advertisers is that they think the way to get their money's worth with color is to soak the page in brilliant hued ink. But the effectiveness of color has little to do with quantity and everything do with how well the ad is planned and how strategically color is placed in the layout.

Good advertisers use an extra color to call attention to the illustration. Often a slight red or orange screen can be used to add warmth to an otherwise dull black and white print. It can also be used to tie the copy in with the headline. Color is also effective to highlight key headline words, phrases or subheads. It can be used to guide the reader's eye from the illustration, to the headline, and on into the body copy of the ad.

Color can also be an identifying trademark when used regularly in every advertisement, in the same way and in the same place. Can you imagine, for example, a John Deere ad without green or a Kodak ad without the distinctive yellow?

When used effectively a single color simply "looks right" without calling attention to itself. It helps stop the reader and then guides the eye through the ad. If the color is too intense without a focal point, then the reader may just turn on by

If the dominant use of color is in the wrong place, say only on the bottom, then the eye drops immediately to that part of the page and then the reader moves on. Few readers go back and read an ad once the eye has been pulled below the main message.

A recent advertising study found that the average magazine reader spends two seconds or less per page looking for something that catches his or her interest. That's all the time you have to "hook" the reader. This is why a dominant headline that promises a benefit, an attention grabbing illustration that features your product or service, and the effective use of color is so important.

Newspaper publishers, spurred by the success of the colorful and well designed

USA Today, have been forced in recent years to take a closer look at the use of color on their editorial pages. The Poynter Institute for Media Studies has found that color works the same on editorial pages as it does on advertising pages. The reader's eye is immediately drawn to the color. If the color is in the wrong place or not highlighting the most interesting thing on the page, then the reader is likely to turn to the next page.

Long standing advertising research however, shows that the readership of an advertisement can be increased by up to 32 percent with the right use of color. That is a bargain. For example, a single page in this magazine costs \$595 or less depending upon frequency. But through the proper use of color the advertiser can increase readership by up to 32 percent by adding a second color which costs only \$100 more per page.

So the question is not whether to use color in advertisements, or whether it is a good investment. The question simply is whether it is appropriate, whether it will make your ad more attractive and will call attention to your most important sales message.

As in every aspect of advertising, the most "colorful" success comes to those who understand the basic principles of advertising and ad design, and who then do the most and best advance planning.

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