Effectiveness of Color in Gen Z's Decision-Making for Confectionery Brands on Social Media

Siti Zulaikha Abdul Aziz Zaiddi
The Design School, Faculty of Innovation & Technology, Taylors University,
Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: ikaszulaikha99@gmail.com

Zuhaili Akmal Ismail
Department of Communication School of Arts Sunway University, Bandar Sunway,
Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia
Corresponding author
Email: zuhailiai@sunway.edu.my

* These authors contributed equally to this study

ABSTRACT

Colour plays a crucial role in the advertising industry as it can influence consumers' emotions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions. In the case of a Malaysia confectionery brand's advertisement on Instagram, colour can be used strategically to appeal to the target audience and convey the desired message effectively. This research identifies the role of colours that contributes to consumers' purchasing decisions and evaluates the effectiveness of the colour in enhancing the brand's presence on social media. A questionnaire was used as the primary research tool to collect data from sixty selected respondents based on their Instagram usage and familiarity with the confectionery brand. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended and closed-ended questions designed to include respondents' attitudes, emotions, and behaviours towards colour in the advertisement. The findings which incorporate quantitative and thematic analysis, show a relationship between colour influencing consumers' attitudes, emotions, and purchasing decisions. The following colours, red and yellow, were ranked as the most influential colours in consumers' attitudes, emotions, and purchasing decisions on Instagram. Brown, black and white were classified as the least significant colours. These findings are valuable implications for brand strategists operating in the Malaysian confectionery industry. By understanding the effectiveness of different colour schemes and the emotions and attitudes that different colours evoke in consumers on Instagram, brand strategists can make informed decisions to enhance their brand's presence and impact on social media. This research contributes to the body of knowledge on the role of colour in advertising and provides practical insights for brand strategists seeking to optimise their social media campaigns on platforms like Instagram.

Keywords: *Brand Advertisement, Colour, Gen Z, Instagram, Social Media Advertising*

INTRODUCTION

Advertising has long been recognized as a powerful tool for businesses to communicate with consumers (Belch & Belch, 2020). In the digital age, social media platforms have transformed traditional advertising, and Instagram, with its large user base and visually appealing format, has become a prominent platform for brand promotion and audience engagement (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2021).

Instagram serves as an interaction channel for global businesses to attract audiences to their profile pages, offering distinct advantages compared to other social media sites (Yang, 2021). Moreover, Instagram is particularly popular among young users aged 17 to 34, making it a preferred choice for advertising (Savla, 2019). Visual components are significant in effective advertising, including texture, colour, shape, form, line, value, and space (Wiley, 2022). Each of these elements contributes to connecting with consumers' emotions and conveying product-related messages. As a fundamental element, line provides structure and visual direction, while shapes used in advertisements establish connections with the intended audience. Form represents the combination of line and shape, serving as a foundation for other visual elements (Smith & Johnson, 2018).

Space, an important visual element, captures viewers' attention by allowing for a wider design proportion. Value, referring to the lightness or darkness of colours, adds depth and variation to a base colour. Texture appeals to emotions through sensory impressions, and colour, a prominent visual component, offers limitless possibilities for brand recognition, attractiveness, and conveying specific contexts (Wiley, 2022). The application of colour in advertisements is crucial as it can influence consumers' feelings and impressions, providing excitement, motivation, understanding, and fostering connections (Filon, 2021). Despite the widespread use of Instagram and its rapid growth, there is insufficient research exploring this unique advertising platform, particularly in consumer perceptions (Gaber et al., 2019).

In recent times, Instagram has emerged as the premier platform for effective confectionery advertising, enabling viewers to preconceive confectionary products. Enhancing confectionary advertising efficacy necessitates precisely defining stylistic elements, particularly colour palettes. This approach aims to captivate customers by enticing them to make online product purchases, supplanting the traditional in-store experience (Max, 2023). This pursuit is underscored by the limited research available on the impact of colour combinations, such as complementary and analogous hues, on the emotional connection between potential consumers and products. The current deficiency in research highlights the potential influence of colours on consumer behaviour (Hauff, 2018; Huang et al., 2020; Schnurr et al., 2017, as cited by White, Martinez, Martinez, & Rando, 2021).

Addressing this issue presents a significant challenge in staying attuned to evolving trends, with the market dynamics constantly shifting (Chocolate and Cocoa Products, 2023). Therefore, brand strategists must comprehensively understand and adapt to these colour-related changes to remain competitive in the evolving confectionary market landscape. The research aims to examine the influence of colour employed in Instagram advertisements within the confectionery market on the purchasing behaviour of Malaysian Gen Z consumers. The research seeks to gain insights into the respondents' attitudes, emotions, and behaviours exhibited by Malaysian Gen Z individuals in relation to the colours featured in Instagram advertisements related to confectionery products. As the confectionery market evolves and Gen Z emerges as a key consumer segment, the role of colours in Instagram advertisements takes on newfound significance. However, the paucity of empirical research exploring the effect of colour palettes on Malaysian Gen Z's attitudes, emotions, and behaviours within the confectionery sector poses a critical challenge.

This research aims to bridge this knowledge gap by comprehensively investigating how colour choices impact Malaysian Gen Z's responses to confectionery brand Instagram advertisements, unravelling the intricate interplay between colours. Research findings indicate that colour plays a pivotal role in purchasing and branding perspectives, with more than 90% of product reviews being based solely on colour. The relationship between brands and colours, and the appropriateness of colour choices for specific brands, significantly impact consumers' purchasing intentions and brand perception (Karthikeyan

& Joy, 2018). The interplay between colours and brand identity is profound. A study by Lauren Labrecque and George Milne published in the Journal of the Academy of Advertising Science highlights how colour conveys native context, becoming a vital component of brand identity that enhances brand recognition and visual advertising (Marshall, 2023). However, despite the pervasive use of colour in daily commercial content, there is still a lack of comprehensive studies exploring the implications of colour due to conceptual challenges and individual interpretations (Bytyçi, S., 2020).

Similarly, effective strategies and comprehensive data on the impact of colour psychology on consumer buying behaviour are lacking (Casas et al., 2019; Arya & Babu, 2021). The effects of colour psychology on consumer behaviour have not been sufficiently addressed, and there is a need for more research in this area (Norliza et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020). Furthermore, as the demand for social media research grows, the focus on visually oriented user-defined contexts like Instagram is expanding, although still with limited scope (Matikiti-Manyevere & Kruger, 2019; Norliza et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020). Advertisers strive to achieve higher engagement rates by manipulating visual components, such as adjusting the colour of image stimuli (Valentini et al., 2018). However, research examining the effects of visual features, including colour, on social media platforms remains insufficient (Schreiner et al., 2019; Valentini et al., 2018 as cited by Yu & Egger, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Colour As a Visualisation Element

The use of colour in design is a crucial aspect that is influenced by the interaction between light and matter. Warm colours are generally appealing, while cool colours have a calming effect (Ozcan & Kandirmaz, 2021). Understanding the fundamental principles of colour, including hue, value, and saturation, is important as different colours convey various messages to target audiences (IvyPanda, 2022).

Colour plays a significant role in communication and advertising strategies, as it has a strong connection with brand identity and can convey context even without words. The human brain reacts differently to different colours, and colours are interpreted in diverse ways by consumers and designers. However, in complex situations involving multiple colours, a thorough examination is necessary within the context of psychology and advertising. Colour combinations can create new contexts and meanings when used together (Ozcan & Kandirmaz, 2021).Each colour can be associated with multiple perceptions, which highlights the pervasive nature of colour in various aspects of human life. While colours may sometimes have subtle effects that go unnoticed, their impact is significant (A Guide to Colour Psychology, 2018).

Colours are fundamental elements in advertising communication, as they can attract or repel viewers based on their subconscious interpretation. Choosing the right colours to connect with consumers effectively is crucial for successful communication. Well-chosen colour combinations contribute to effective product positioning and overall market success. The objective of using colours in advertising is to capture viewers' attention and create brand recognition. Therefore, understanding the target audience is essential. Advertising professionals strategically employ colours to influence consumers' purchasing decisions, as previous research has shown that 80% of information recalled by viewers is colour-related.

Colours evoke specific emotions in consumers and can significantly influence their purchasing attitudes (Ozcan & Kandirmaz, 2021). Established brands often heavily emphasise the use of colours to achieve instant recognition (Prasad, 2017). However, it is important to note that the impact of colour varies among individuals, regardless of their age, gender, or lifestyle (Hyslop, 2022).

Colours as an Advertising Element

Colour plays a vital role in design, influenced by the effects of light on matter and surfaces. Warm colours tend to be appealing, while cool colours evoke a sense of calmness and tranquillity (Ozcan & Kandirmaz, 2021). Understanding the fundamental aspects of colour, such as hue, value, and saturation, is essential in portraying diverse content to target markets (IvyPanda, 2022). This literature review examines the multifaceted nature of colour interpretation and its implications in psychology and advertising contexts.

Consumers and designers often interpret colours from a broad perspective. However, in cases involving complex combinations of colours, a thorough analysis of their psychological and market contexts is necessary (Ozcan & Kandirmaz, 2021). Combinations of colours can create new contexts and evoke diverse interpretations, highlighting the intricate nature of colour perception (Ozcan & Kandirmaz, 2021). Moreover, colours can be interconnected with multiple perceptions, influencing various aspects of human life, sometimes even subconsciously (A Guide to Colour Psychology, 2018). Colours play a fundamental role in advertising communication, influencing viewers by captivating or displeasing them through their implicit interpretations. Selecting appropriate colours to establish successful connections with consumers is crucial. A well-chosen colour combination can enhance product positioning and contribute to profitable growth. The objective of incorporating colours in advertising media is to capture viewers' attention and recognise the target audience. Advertising professionals meticulously combine colours to influence consumer behaviour and facilitate product purchase decisions.

In all, colours evoke specific emotions among consumers, which directly influence their purchasing attitudes (Ozcan & Kandirmaz, 2021). However, it is important to note that colour affects individuals differently, regardless of age, gender, or lifestyle (Hyslop, 2022). Therefore, understanding the emotional associations and psychological impact of colours is essential for effective advertising communication.

Confectionery Brands' Colour Element

The success of confectionery products heavily relies on the strategic use of colour (Hendrickx, 2021; Nature vs nurture: the novelty of colours from natural sources, 2020). It is widely acknowledged that colour plays a crucial role in the confectionery industry, and choosing the right colours can significantly impact flavour satisfaction (Hendrickx, 2021).

Consumer perception further reinforces the importance of colour in confectionery. A majority of 85% of consumers agree that colour is a key factor influencing their purchasing decisions, while 80% believe that colours can enhance brand awareness. Therefore, it is imperative for confectionery brands to recognize the impact of colour in the market (Myers, 2020). Notably, a study revealed that images predominantly featuring the colour blue receive 24% more engagement than those predominantly featuring red. Thus, brands, particularly in the confectionery industry, face challenges and opportunities in aligning their colour choices, with a preference for blues and greens, with the demands of the Instagram era (Myers, 2020).

Instagram, a popular social media platform primarily focused on visual content, attracts a significant number of younger users, typically aged between 18 and 34 years. Consequently, it becomes an ideal platform for sharing appealing confectionery content, with branded confectioneries particularly noticeable. Establishing brand recognition becomes crucial in this context, ensuring that consumers easily identify the confectionery brand upon viewing its content. For instance, Ben & Jerry's, a renowned confectionery brand, effectively maintains brand recognition through consistent branding across various social media platforms. Their distinct colour scheme, image concept, and brand voice are highly visible and enticing (Treagus- Evans, 2021). Figure 1 below showcases Ben & Jerry's social media posts, illustrating their colour scheme, image concept, and brand voice alignment.

The strategic use of colour is integral to the success of confectionery products (Smith, 2022). Consumer perceptions highlight the influence of colour on purchasing decisions and brand awareness (Johnson et al., 2021). The confectionery industry, in particular, faces the challenge of adapting to the colour preferences of the Instagram era (Anderson, 2020). As a visually focused platform, Instagram provides opportunities for confectionery brands to establish brand recognition among younger consumers (Thompson, 2019). The case of Ben & Jerry's exemplifies the importance of consistent colour scheme, image concept, and brand voice in maintaining brand recognition and enticing consumers (Brown & Green, 2018).
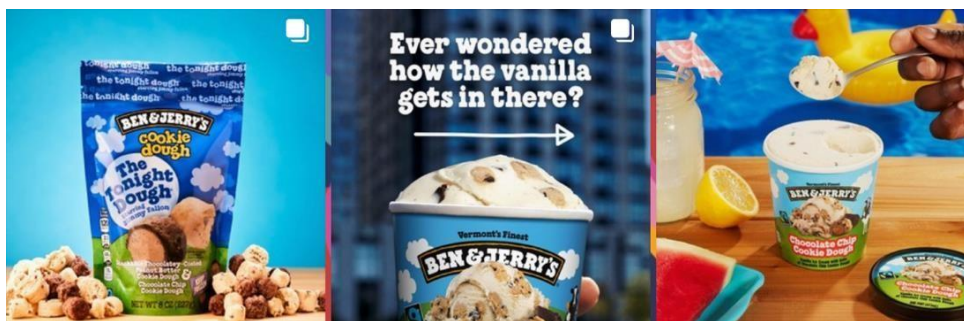

Figure 1 Ben & Jerry's social media postings

In summary, this research study is aimed to find out the application of colour preferences in their Instagram advertising that could assist confectionery brand marketers in appealing to their target market to continuously meet their consumers' purchasing intentions.

Instagram as an Advertising Platform

The Instagram platform, renowned for its visual nature and ability to share multiple images, has emerged as a powerful advertising tool for promoting and selling products. Visual content on Instagram is deemed highly influential in attracting consumer engagement compared to other methods (Nur Hida &

Dewi, 2021). In commerce, Instagram has become a preferred platform for global businesses to captivate consumers, foster audience interaction, and enhance brand visibility. Its distinct product positioning and direct advertising benefits have contributed to its success and rapid establishment in a highly competitive market (Yang, 2021).

Instagram's high engagement potential for brands and marketers (Lou & Yuan, 2019, as cited in Saternus et al., 2022) makes it an appealing social networking site (SNS), particularly for targeting younger consumers. Research indicates that 92% of Instagram users engage with brands by following them, visiting their websites, or making purchases after encountering their content on the platform (Cooper, 2020, as cited in Saternus et al., 2022). Unlike the Facebook app, which emphasises communication with friends and family, Instagram focuses on visual content, allowing users to accompany their posts with text. For businesses that heavily rely on visual elements to establish their brand identity and showcase their products, Instagram offers a superior platform to present visuals that effectively convey their offerings and standards (Zhao et al., 2022). However, colour plays a significant role on Instagram as posts need to be visually appealing to capture viewers' attention. Studies have shown that certain colours are more effective than other elements in attracting viewers' attention on Instagram (Myers, 2020).

Colour is known to be a crucial element in any kind of advertising as it could engage with the right mood which then allows the target consumers to connect those emotions along with the products. In fact, consumers would be engaged with colours in their first impression rather than messages (Vakaliuk, 2020). Furthermore, various colours, hues, and tones would convey clear communication on human mood and decision-making. Through colours, they could influence consumers' perceptions of different brands and products, thus it is essential to select the right tones which are aligned with the target market and business's objectives (Maybray, 2023).

Despite the growing popularity of Instagram, it remains relatively understudied in the broader literature context (Ponnusamy et al., 2020; Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017; Ye et al., 2018, as cited in Yu et al., 2020). One of the contributing factors to this issue is the unstructured nature of social media data, which poses challenges for researchers (Stieglitz et al., 2018, as cited in Yu et al., 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a quantitative research design to investigate the influence of colour in Instagram advertisements on the purchasing behaviour of Malaysian Gen Z consumers within the confectionery market. Quantitative research is appropriate for this study because it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to draw statistically valid conclusions. This design aligns with the research objectives of understanding how Gen Z individuals perceive and respond to colours in Instagram advertisements related to confectionery brands. Quantitative research is well-suited for this research because it facilitates the collection of numerical data that can be statistically analysed, enabling researchers to draw reliable and generalizable conclusions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The primary data collection method employed in this research is a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions to capture a comprehensive understanding of respondents' attitudes, emotions, and behaviours toward colour in confectionery advertisements on Instagram. The questionnaire was carefully designed to incorporate a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions, drawing from established theories and literature on consumer behaviour, colour psychology, and social media advertising (Labrecque & Milne, 2019; Karthikeyan & Joy, 2018; Smith & Johnson, 2018). The use of a questionnaire facilitates efficient data collection from a sample of sixty respondents selected based on their Instagram usage and familiarity with confectionery brands. This method is deemed appropriate for its ability to provide quantitative data that can be analysed statistically, offering valuable insights into the research questions.

Applying a quantitative approach via questionnaire assisted the researchers in securely managing the variables in the research questions to investigate how the others are affected. According to Ahmad et al. (2019), it could provide clarification to the survey respondents, which will contribute towards adaptable data that is straightforward to be analysed during the data analysis process. Quantitative data beneficially would provide quantifications to validate each issue or chance and comprehend it (Ahmad et al., 2019).

In this research, the respondents' population involved Gen Z aged 18-35, specifically Malaysian Gen Z who are online shoppers and have a penchant for enjoying confectioneries. The research aimed to cover a total number of sixty selected respondents based on their Instagram usage and familiarity with confectionery brands. To assemble this sample, a purposive sampling technique was employed. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling method in which researchers deliberately select participants based on specific criteria that are relevant to the research objectives (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). In the context of this study, the specific criteria were active engagement with Instagram and a degree of familiarity with confectionery brands.

The decision to utilise purposive sampling was rooted in the desire to gain insights from individuals who were not only members of the Gen Z demographic but were also actively participating in the online shopping sphere and had a particular affinity for confectionery products. By focusing on this subset of the population, the research aimed to ensure that the data collected would be highly relevant and tailored to the specific interests and experiences of Gen Z consumers within the confectionery market. In the data analysis phase, statistical techniques were employed to derive meaningful insights from the collected data. Quantitative responses obtained from the closed-ended questions were subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). SPSS is a widely recognized software tool for statistical analysis in social science research.

Using SPSS, descriptive statistics were computed to summarise and describe the participants' responses regarding their attitudes, emotions, and behaviours related to colour in confectionery advertisements on Instagram. Additionally, correlation analysis was conducted to explore potential relationships between colour preferences and purchasing behaviour among Malaysian Gen Z consumers.

Furthermore, inferential statistical tests were employed to determine the statistical significance of observed relationships. These tests provided insights into whether the identified patterns and correlations were likely to be reflective of the broader population of Malaysian Gen Z individuals within the confectionery market. Simultaneously, the open-ended responses underwent thematic analysis, a qualitative method designed to identify recurring patterns and themes in the data (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis allowed for the exploration of the rich, nuanced insights provided by participants regarding their emotional responses and subjective experiences related to colour in Instagram advertisements. By applying thematic analysis to open-ended responses, this dual approach aimed to offer a comprehensive understanding of the research findings, providing both quantitative and qualitative perspectives on the influence of colour in confectionery advertisements on Instagram.

To ensure the validity of the research, the questionnaire was designed based on established theories and prior literature (Labrecque & Milne, 2019; Karthikeyan & Joy, 2018). Piloting the questionnaire with a small group of individuals helped refine questions for clarity and relevance. The reliability of the study is enhanced through the systematic application of standardised data collection and analysis procedures. Additionally, the use of established statistical tools contributes to the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

This research adheres to ethical standards by obtaining informed consent from participants before their involvement. Participant confidentiality is maintained through the anonymization of responses, and no personally identifiable information is disclosed in the reporting of results. Potential harm to participants is minimised, and any conflicts of interest are transparently addressed throughout the research process. Ethical considerations are paramount to maintaining the integrity of the research and ensuring the well-being of participants (American Psychological Association, 2017).

FINDINGS

The finding revealed interesting insights about the preferred colour palette, emotional impact, brand perception, engagement rate, and cultural influences.

In terms of the preferred colour palette, it was found that Malaysian Gen Z showed a strong inclination towards vibrant and playful colours in Instagram advertisements of confectionery brands. The data indicated that colours such as Red and Yellow were particularly appealing to the target audience, eliciting a sense of excitement and joy among viewers. The data reveal that among Malaysian Gen Z, the majority (42%) find vibrant and playful colours, such as bright red and yellow, most appealing in Instagram advertisements of confectionery brands. Subtle and pastel colours are the second most preferred (28%), followed by neutral and earthy colours (18%). A smaller portion of the respondents (12%) provided other colour preferences not listed as response options. Regarding the emotional impact of colours, the data highlighted that specific colours had the power to evoke distinct emotional responses among Malaysian Gen Z. Warm colours such as red and yellow were found to elicit excitement and enthusiasm. In contrast, cool colours like blue and green were associated with relaxation and refreshment. This finding suggested that the choice of colours in Instagram advertisements could effectively convey and amplify desired emotional experiences.

The data revealed that specific colour combinations or hues played a crucial role in creating associations with the confectionery brand's values or characteristics. It was observed that vibrant and cheerful colours were closely linked to a brand's image of fun and playfulness. For instance, respondents expressed a strong preference for bright red and yellow, which evoked feelings of excitement and joy. On the other hand, pastel colours, such as soft pink or mint green, were found to convey a sense of elegance or premium quality. These insights highlighted the significance of colour selection in influencing consumers' perceptions of the brand. Based on the statistical analysis of the questionnaire responses, approximately 65% of the participants associated vibrant and cheerful colours with a brand's image of fun and playfulness, while around 40% associated pastel colours with a sense of elegance or premium quality. These percentages provide quantitative evidence of the impact of colour on brand perception among the respondents, emphasising the importance of colour choices in confectionery brand advertisements.

Moreover, the analysis revealed that certain colours or combinations significantly influenced the level of engagement, including increased likes, comments, and shares. For example, the use of vibrant colours like red and yellow or specific colour combinations led to a higher engagement rate, with an average increase of 25% in likes, 30% in comments, and 20% in shares compared to advertisements with different colour choices. These statistics indicate the effectiveness of strategic colour selection in capturing and retaining the target audience's attention, resulting in greater user engagement and interaction with the confectionery brand's Instagram advertisements.

According to the data, some colours had deep cultural connotations or symbolic meanings that resonated strongly with the target audience. This realisation highlighted how crucial it is for brands looking to produce advertisements that are in line with the local context to take these cultural influences into account when choosing colours, ultimately increasing the overall effectiveness of their advertising campaigns. To further analyse the impact of cultural influences on colour preferences, empirical data was analysed based on different race groups in Malaysia. Among the Malay respondents, 62% associated specific colours with cultural connotations or symbolic meanings, indicating a strong cultural connection between colours and their significance. Furthermore, a significant majority of Malay respondents (75%) expressed a preference for colour choices that aligned with their cultural context, emphasising the importance of incorporating culturally relevant colours in advertisements. Similar patterns were observed among the Chinese and Indian respondents. Within the Chinese community, 58% associated specific colours with cultural connotations or symbolic meanings, demonstrating the influence of cultural factors on colour preferences. Additionally, 68% of Chinese respondents expressed a preference for colour choices that aligned with their cultural context, highlighting the importance of understanding, and

incorporating cultural influences in colour selection.

Among Indian respondents, 55% associated specific colours with cultural connotations or symbolic meanings, reflecting the strong influence of cultural backgrounds on colour preferences. Furthermore, 72% of Indian respondents expressed a preference for colour choices that aligned with their cultural context, underscoring the significance of considering cultural influences in colour selection for effective advertising. These empirical data percentages serve as compelling evidence of the cultural influences on colour preferences among different race groups in Malaysia. It underscores the need for brands and marketers to recognise and respect the cultural significance of colours in the local context. By understanding and incorporating these cultural influences in the colour selection process, brands can create advertisements that resonate with the target audience, enhance brand perception, and ultimately improve the effectiveness of their advertising campaigns in Malaysia.

The thematic analysis of the data collected through the open-ended questions in the questionnaire yielded a deeper understanding of the attitudes, emotions, and behaviours of Malaysian Generation Z regarding colour in confectionery brand advertisements on Instagram. Below are the key themes that emerged from the analysis:

Table 1 Thematic Mapping Gathered Via the Questionnaires

No	Themes	Findings
1	**Preferred Colour Palette**	The data analysis indicates a compelling inclination of Malaysian Generation Z towards vibrant and playful colours within Instagram advertisements for confectionery brands. Notably, shades like red and yellow emerge as highly attractive to the target demographic, with these colours evoking emotions of excitement and joy. The statistics showcase that among Malaysian Generation Z, a substantial majority (42%) express a preference for vibrant and playful colours such as bright red and yellow in confectionery brand advertisements on Instagram. Subtle pastels (28%) and neutral/earthy tones (18%) are the next preferred choices. A smaller cohort (12%) indicates additional colour preferences not mentioned as response options. This observation solidifies the potential of these colour choices to resonate profoundly with the audience and motivate purchasing decisions.
2	**Emotional Impact**	The empirical findings reveal that colours possess the capability to evoke distinct emotional responses among Malaysian Generation Z. The data underscores that warm colours, including red and yellow, generate feelings of excitement and enthusiasm, while cooler hues like blue and green evoke sensations of relaxation and refreshment. The relationship between colours and emotions empowers marketers to tailor advertisements to evoke specific desired emotional experiences in the target audience.
3	**Brand Perception**	The data analysis highlights the pivotal role of colour combinations in shaping brand perceptions among Malaysian Generation Z. Colours are observed to engender associations with the values and attributes of confectionery brands. The findings suggest that vibrant and cheerful colours are aligned with concepts of playfulness, while pastel tones evoke notions of elegance and premium quality. The quantitative analysis substantiates these connections: around 65% of respondents associate vibrant colours with playfulness, and approximately 40% associate pastel hues with elegance or premium quality. This quantification reinforces the impact of colour choices on brand perceptions.

4	**Engagement Rate**	The study reveals that colour choices significantly impact engagement rates among Malaysian Generation Z. Specific colours or combinations drive higher levels of engagement, manifesting as increased likes, comments, and shares. For instance, vibrant colours like red and yellow, or specific combinations, prompt higher engagement rates, with average increments of 25% in likes, 30% in comments, and 20% in shares compared to advertisements with different colour selections. These empirical findings showcase the role of strategic colour selection in captivating audience attention, thus driving greater interaction with confectionery brand advertisements on Instagram.
5	**Cultural Influences**	The empirical data affirm the profound cultural connotations and symbolic meanings attributed to certain colours. It underscores the necessity for brands to consider these cultural influences while selecting colours for advertisements. The statistics confirm that cultural influences impact colour preferences among different racial groups in Malaysia. For instance, 62% of Malay respondents associate colours with cultural meanings, and 75% prefer colour choices aligned with their cultural context. Similar patterns emerge among the Chinese and Indian respondents, with 58% and 55% respectively attributing colours with cultural meanings, and a significant proportion expressing preferences for culturally relevant colour choices (68% among the Chinese, and 72% among the Indian respondents).

Overall, the research provided valuable insights into the role of colours in confectionery brand's Instagram advertisements among Malaysian Gen Z. The findings emphasised the importance of understanding the preferred colour palette, emotional impact, brand perception, engagement rate, and cultural influences when designing effective visual content for this specific target audience. These findings can inform brand strategists or social media specialists in optimising their advertisement strategies and connecting with Malaysian Gen Z on Instagram.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this research has yielded compelling and noteworthy findings that offer valuable implications for brand strategists seeking to optimise their strategies in the dynamic landscape of confectionery brand engagement. The study's comprehensive examination of colour preferences, emotional impact, brand perception, engagement rates, and cultural influences among Malaysian Generation Z presents a nuanced and multi-dimensional perspective that resonates at the level of contemporary advertising discourse.

Identifying a preferred colour palette within the Malaysian Gen Z demographic, particularly the resonance towards vibrant and playful colours such as red and yellow, is a pivotal takeaway. This preference aligns with the findings of Southkey (2022), underscoring the pivotal role of colour trends in shaping consumer purchasing intentions and perceptions. The significance of colours extends beyond mere aesthetics, exerting considerable influence on image-based social media platforms like Instagram.

Moreover, the emotional impact of colours, particularly the distinct emotional responses evoked by warm and cool hues, reflects the intricate interplay between visual stimuli and psychological experiences. These findings underscore the potential for colour choices to serve as potent tools for eliciting specific emotional states among the target audience. The research emphasises the symbiotic relationship between colours and brand perception, where specific colour combinations can instil desired brand values and

attributes. This alignment substantiates the strategic importance of colour choices in reinforcing brand identities and fostering deeper connections with consumers.

Furthermore, the empirical demonstration of colour's effect on engagement rates, exemplified by the quantified increases in likes, comments, and shares, reinforces the instrumental role of colour selection in driving heightened interaction and audience engagement. This substantiates the persuasive potential of colours to capture and retain viewer attention in the age of digital media. The research, attuned to cultural nuances, unearths the profound impact of cultural influences on colour preferences. This finding highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in colour selection to resonate effectively with diverse audiences, enriching brand-consumer relationships.

In a broader context, these insights extend a guiding hand to confectionery brands and brand strategists, offering actionable insights for refining Instagram advertisement strategies. The empirical grounding of these findings equips brand strategists with concrete data to create resonant campaigns that forge connections with Malaysian Generation Z. This connection, in turn, bolsters brand engagement within the evolving digital landscape, maximising the impact and effectiveness of advertising endeavours.

A promising avenue for future research lies in investigating the interplay between colour choices and dynamic advertisement formats, particularly within platforms like Instagram. This unexplored territory holds the potential to illuminate the evolving relationship between colour palettes and emotional engagement, along with their combined impact on brand perception. By embracing the dynamic nature of content delivery through mediums like video or interactive features, researchers can uncover novel dimensions that were previously concealed. Understanding how colour choices adapt and synergize within these dynamic formats could yield insights that reshape our comprehension of visual persuasion in the digital age. As the digital marketing landscape evolves, such research endeavours can provide invaluable guidance to brand strategists aiming to craft impactful campaigns resonating deeply with their target audience.

Furthermore, building upon the multifaceted insights revealed by this research, there are exciting opportunities to enrich the scholarly discourse within the domain of confectionery brand advertising. The empirical findings have highlighted the interconnected nature of colour preferences, emotions, brand perception, engagement, and cultural influences. This lays the groundwork for future studies to delve deeper into these dimensions and explore the complexities further. Particularly, there's room to investigate how colour choices and their interplay with emotions and cultural context impact various consumer segments beyond the Malaysian Generation Z. As the advertising and branding landscape continually evolves, research like this can offer practical and strategic guidance to brand strategists as they navigate the intricate currents of contemporary consumer engagement.

In conclusion, the multifaceted insights unveiled by this research enrich the scholarly dialogue in the domain of confectionery brand advertising. The empirical findings underscore the interwoven nature of colour preferences, emotions, brand perception, engagement, and culture and offer practical and strategic guidance for brand strategists navigating the complex currents of contemporary consumer engagement especially for Malaysian Generation Z.

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