



UNIT-3

The Use of Colour in Fashion Design

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Describe the Importance of colour in designing
- ✓ Explain the relationship of colour in a garment and choosing the appropriate colour for a garment

Unit 3

The Uses of Colour in Fashion Design

Colour has been investigated and used for more than 2000 years. Throughout history, different civilizations have experimented and learned more about colour. We are still learning today about how colour affects us and its importance in our lives. Colour is simply light of different wavelengths and frequencies and light is just one form of energy made up from photons. Colour is a visual language. It evokes our feeling and affects our lives. It is one of the basic components of fashion, the other being, texture, details and silhouettes.

Colour

Colour can be the basis for a whole group or line. It is the first element to which consumers respond. People relate personally to colour, usually either selecting or rejecting a garment because of its colour appeal. Therefore, designers must consider their customers and provide colours that are both appealing and flattering. People in many agricultural countries, who have deep roots in folk traditions, have been exposed to different uses of colour than people who live in business-oriented Western countries. People connect certain colours with holidays and seasons. They expect to see the colours of autumn leaves in fall clothing, reds and greens for the winter holidays, the pastels of flowers in the spring, and refreshing white for the summer. All manufacturers include some of these colours in their lines.

Colour Dimensions

Colour has three different dimensions:

Hue, value, and intensity

a) Hue

Hue enables us to tell one colour from another, such as red from blue or green.

b) Value

Value refers to the use of darks and lights; it is the variation of light strength in a colour. The value scale runs from white to black. White is pure light, black the total absence of light; adding white lightens a colour and adding black darkens it. The lighter values are called *tints* and the darker ones are called shades

Every garment has value contrasts, even if only those created by normal gathers and folds. Strong value contrasts (pure black against pure white is the strongest). Close value contrasts lend a more conservative, refined impression that is easier for the average person to accept.

c) Intensity

Intensity is the relative brightness (strength) or paleness (weakness) of a colour. Bright colours are considered high-intensity, pale ones low-intensity. For instance, when paint is paled by adding water, the intensity of its colour is lowered. Within the blue hue, marine blue is high intensity and soft pastel blue is low. Generally, vivid colours should be combined with others of the same intensity for balance. However, balance is also achieved when large amounts of pale or dark colours are used in combination with a touch of bright colour in a trim, top stitching, or embroidery.

Warm Colours

We classify red, yellow, and orange as warm colours because of their association with fire and the sun. Warm colours are stimulating, aggressive, and lively.

Red has come to denote valentines, love, and romance; it is also exciting, fiery, and dangerous. A popular colour for sportswear and evening wear, it is one of the few colours used in high intensities for clothing in every season. *Yellow* is bright, sunny, cheerful, friendly, and Optimistic. It is often a difficult colour to wear because it conflicts with many skin tones.

Orange combines the sunniness of yellow and the warmth of red. It can also be a difficult colour to wear: intense orange can be irritating and overpowering and it best toned to a softer peach or apricot or limited to use in active wear.

Cool Colours

Cool colours, as the term implies, are refreshing in contrast with warm colours. The cool colours-blue, green, and purple-remind us of the sky and the sea.

Blue

Blue is quiet, restful, and reserved. It is usually found in very high (pale blue) or very low (navy blue) values in clothing. Navy blue is one of the most popular clothing colours. For that reason most manufacturers include it in at least their spring or summer line.

Green

Green is the most refreshing colour, suggesting peace, rest, "calm, and quiet. Although popular for interior design, it is inexplicably the least popular colour for dresses. It is used primarily in a dark value in fall sportswear lines or mixed with neutrals to create earthy olive or loden.

Purple

Purple, historically associated with royalty, has come to represent wealth, dignity, and drama. Because it can be melancholy when dark and intense, it is more often used in a paler violet.

Neutrals

In clothing, neutrals such as beige, tan, brown, white, grey, and black are even more popular than the colours just mentioned. The reason is probably that they present a pleasing background for the wearer without competing for attention. Neutrals are part of every season's fashion picture, as either a strong fashion statement or a way to round out a colour story. White is associated with purity and cleanliness, which is why doctors and nurses have traditionally worn it. Because it reflects light, it is cool in the summer.

Colour Naming

An exciting colour name can be important in promoting a fashion look. Fashion colours sometimes reappear with new names that make them seem fresh. Plum of one year might return as aubergine in another. Oil paint colour lists, as well as books featuring the names of flowers, trees, wood, fruit, vegetables, spices, wines, gems, and animals, can provide colour-name ideas. To add interest, colourists and fashion journalists even set moods with names such as *China blue*.

Colour Selection

Every line should include a range of colours that appeals to a variety of customers. Within the line, each group is usually formulated around a colour plan consisting of as few as two colours or many colours. Colour choices must reflect season, climate, and type of garment. Active sportswear, for example, employs much more vivid colours than spectator sportswear. The line's colour story should include some fashion colours selected from research provided by trade associations, fibre companies, or design report predictions. By basing a colour story on these predictions, the designer is assured that the group will be in the mainstream of fashion. Sometimes the designer selects one or two colours from the predictions and then adds his or her own colour choices to balance them. The group is then rounded out with staple colours such as neutrals, darks, white, or black. In any case, the colour story must be meaningful, not just a group of unrelated colours. It might be all bright, or all muted, or a balance of darks and lights.

Colour Relationships within a Garment

There are several systems, all using measured scales, to guide in the selection of colour combinations. Primary and secondary colours differ from one system to another, but looking at a rainbow will show you the basic order of colours' relationship to one another. Red, yellow, and blue are the three **primary colours** from which all other colours are derived. Mixing yellow and red paints creates orange; red and blue create purple; and blue and yellow create green-the three **secondary colours**. Mixtures of primary and secondary colours create every colour in between. The entire spectrum is often arranged into a colour wheel to demonstrate the concept more clearly. However, the working fashion industry pays little attention to colour relationships, basing selections instead on intuition and researched colour forecasts.

There are no hard and fast rules for the use of colours. Rather, *two colours are harmonious if they are used so that one colour enhances the beauty of the other*. Colours are now combined in many more unusual ways than ever before. Colours that used to be appropriate only for evening are now used also in

sportswear. Ethnic influences on fashion have changed our view of colour combinations, making us more receptive to new ideas. In addition, colours run in fashion cycles just as styles do.

Prang Colour System

Basically colours are divided into three groups.

1. Primary colours
2. Secondary colours
3. Tertiary Colours

- **Primary Colours**

Light is comprised of the colour spectrum. This spectrum is what we see in the rainbow. It is amazing that this splash of colour is built upon only three fundamental colours or hues. They are called the primary colours because they exist alone and are not created by the mixing of any other colours. These are red, blue and yellow. These colours lie an equal distance apart on the colour wheel.



There are three Primary colours: RED, YELLOW and BLUE (Fig 3.1). Primary colours cannot be created by mixing with other colours.

Contrary to popular belief, there are actually two types of primary colours - Subtractive and Additive. Subtractive colours are colours that are used in conjunction with reflected light. In this case the subtractive colours are blue, red and yellow.

Additive colours are colours that are used in conjunction with emitted light. In this case the additive primary colours are red, green and blue.

- **Subtractive Colours**

These are the colours that are associated with the subtraction of light and used in pigments for making paints, inks, coloured fabrics, and general coloured coatings that we see and use every day. All printing processes use subtractive colours in the form of cyan (blue) magenta (red) yellow and black. This is known as CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black) the K stands for black in the printing process. If all three of the subtractive primary colours were combined together, they would produce black.

Additive Colours

These are the colours that are obtained by emitted light. The additive primary colours are red, green and blue. If all three of the additive colours were combined together in the form of light, they would produce white.

Secondary Colours

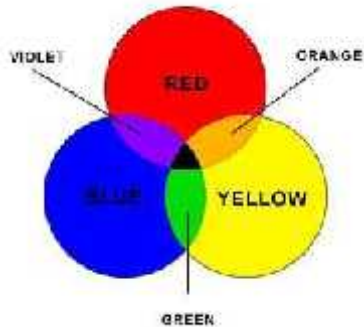


Fig 3.2

A colour created by mixing two primary colours is called a secondary colour.

For example: orange is a secondary colour which is created when the subtractive primary colours red and yellow are mixed together (Fig3.2). Secondary colours can only be created by mixing true primary colours.

- **Tertiary Colours**

This mixing process can be extended further to create the tertiary colours. These are also called the intermediate colours. These are created when one primary colour is combined with one secondary colour in equal parts. I.e. a blue- purple hue is developed when the primary colour blue is combined with the secondary colour purple. The colour wheel demonstrates how the different hues visually relate to one another.

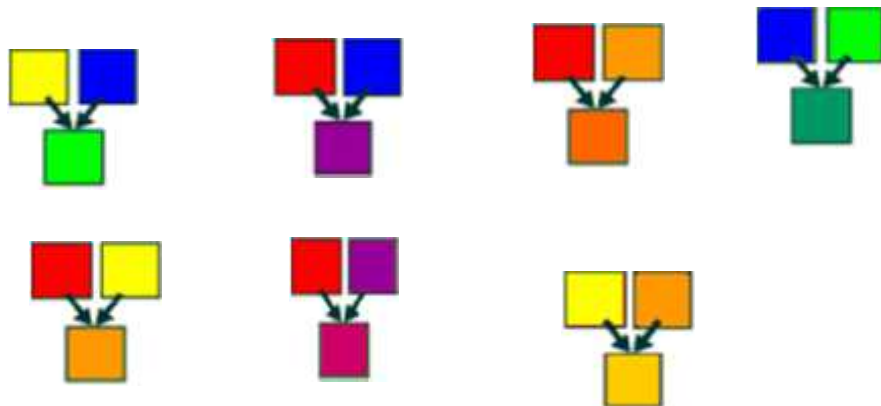


Fig 3.3

Dimensions of Colour

There are three properties or qualities which may be called the dimensions of colour and which are just as distinct from one another as the length, breadth and thickness of an object. These colour dimensions are:

1. The Hue or name of the colour (their warmth or coolness)
2. The value of the colour (their tightness or darkness)
3. The intensity of the colour (their brightness or dullness)

All these three are present in every colour, just as every object has length, breadth and thickness.

Hue

Hue enables us to tell one colour from another, such as red from blue or green.

Value

Value refers to the use of darks and lights; it is the variation of light strength in a colour. The value scale runs from white to black. White is pure light, black the total absence of light; adding white lightens a colour and adding black darkens it.

- a) **Tint:** the lighter values are called tints. Add only white to create a tint of a particular colour i.e. the colour pink is actually a tint of red.
- b) **Shades:** the darker values are called shades. Add only black to create a shade of that colour.
- c) **Tone:** add various degrees of both black and white to a colour to create a tone of that colour.

Every garment has value contrasts, even if only those created by normal gathers and folds. Strong value contrasts (pure black against pure white is the strongest) achieve a dramatic effect. Close value contrasts lend a more conservative, refined impression that is easier for the average person to accept.

Colour Harmonies

Creating colour harmony with a colour wheel:

The standard colour harmonies may be divided into two main groups.

- Harmonies of related colours
- Harmonies of contrasting colours

Harmonies of Related Colours

Related colour harmonies have one hue in common

Complementary Harmony:

Complementary Harmony results from using hues opposite each other in the colour wheel.

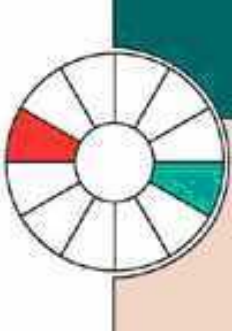


Fig 3.4

Blue and orange, red and green, yellow orange and blue-violet are an example of complementary harmony shown in Fig .3.4. Simple complementary schemes of two hues can be extended by using tints, tones, or shades of the selected hues.

When complementary hues are used in their full strength and in equal quantities, they intensify each other and produce sharp contrasts. This causes a vibration that is often painful to the eye. Red will seem redder when placed next to its complement, green, than when red is used with yellow. Green appears greener next to red than when used next to yellow. This phenomenon is called simultaneous contrast. The effect of the vibrations caused by these combinations can be lessened by using a smaller amount of intense colour or by substituting a tone or shade of the desired hue.

Split complement Harmony

This is a variation on the complementary colour scheme in a slightly more sophisticated way. It is composed primarily of one dominant colour and two hues that sit across on either side of its complementary colour directly across the colour wheel.

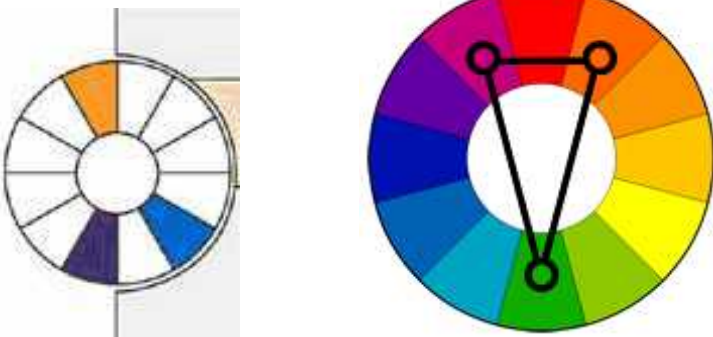


Fig 3.5

An example Fig 3.5 of a split complementary colour scheme would be yellow joined with red-violet and blue –violet

Triad Harmony:



Fig 3.6

A Triad harmony uses three hues placed on equal distance on the colour wheel.

In Fig 3.6 sample triad colour schemes are yellow, red, and blue or orange, purple, and green.

Contrasting Colour Harmonies

Contrasting colour Harmonies have no hue in common.

Analogous Harmony

Analogous Harmony uses colours that appear next to each other on the colour wheel.

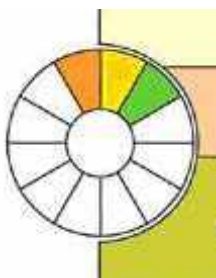


Fig 3.7

Monochromatic Harmonies

Monochromatic Harmony uses one hue.

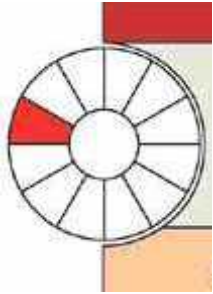


Fig 3.8

Various tints, tones, and shades of one hue are used in Monochromatic Harmony (Fig 3.8) for instance, light pink, rose, maroon, and watermelon. If value and chroma gradations are too close together, the effect may be unpleasing because of ambiguity of colours, giving the impression of a mismatch. These schemes require noticeable differences to avoid a fatiguing and monotonous effect.

Achromatic Colour Scheme:

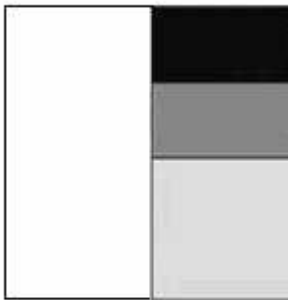


Fig 3.9

Achromatic means absence of colour. This scheme has white and black at the two extremes with tones of grey in between.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Fashion Design Essentials: 100 Principles of Fashion Design (By Jay Calderin)*
- ✓ *Introduction to Fashion Design (By Patrick John)*
- ✓ *Fashion A Very Short Introduction (BY Rebecca Arnold)*
- ✓ *Colors for Modern Fashion (By Nancy Riegelman)*