MSc Psychology

Research Proposal

[Document subtitle]

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Contents

PSYCHOLOGICAL TACTICS IN MARKETING – HOW COLORS AND BRANDING INFLUENCE CUSTOMER LOYALTY

1. Introduction

Marketing psychology investigates consumer responses through psychological studies of consumer behaviour and decision-making as well as brand perception. Companies select specific psychological tactics to control customer opinions while strengthening brand involvement before achieving their sales objectives (Kotler & Keller, 2022). Marketing psychology heavily depends on colour psychology together with branding strategies because these elements decisively determine consumer emotional responses and both build trust and develop customer loyalty (Labrecque and Milne 2019). Customer responses to different colours directly influence their buying decisions by forming their perception of products. Through research red evokes excitement and urgency while blue builds trust and reliability because green produces sentiments of health benefits and sustainability (Elliot & Maier, 2014). Through their branding elements that combine logos with typography and colour schemes companies build lasting brand recognition which leads to customer loyalty according to Keller (2020).

Keeping existing customers is more economically beneficial for marketing success than obtaining new clients (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). The strategic psychological branding methods using uniform design elements and colour combinations strengthen customer trust and emotional bonds which results in steady customer retention and sustained relationships (Zhu & Argo, 2021). Little empirical evidence exists about how branding colours affect customer loyalty rates across different population groups because researchers have mainly focused on theoretical analysis of colour psychology in branding. The majority of existing research based its findings on qualitative approaches and single-company evaluations thus preventing wider application to general consumer groups (Singh, 2006).

1.1.   Research Question & Hypothesis

This study aims to address the research gap by using survey-based quantitative research to explore the relationship between branding colours and customer loyalty.

Research Question:

    i.   How do different brand colours influence consumer emotions and purchasing decisions?

    ii.   What is the relationship between brand consistency (logos, typography, colours) and customer trust and loyalty?

    iii.   To what extent does brand colour consistency impact purchase decisions in an experimental survey setting?

    iv.   How do demographic factors (age, gender, and cultural background) influence consumer responses to branding colours and consistency?

Hypothesis:

    i.   H1: Consumers exhibit stronger brand loyalty toward brands with consistent colour schemes.

    ii.   H2: Emotional responses to brand colours significantly influence purchasing behaviour.

    iii.   H3: Consumers are more likely to purchase from brands with consistent colours than those with varying brand colours.

This study will provide statistical insights into how branding strategies shape customer loyalty, offering practical marketing implications for businesses.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Colour Psychology in Marketing

Consumer behaviour heavily depends on colour psychology because specific emotions produced by visual hues determine how people perceive things and make decisions (Elliot & Maier, 2014). According to colour theory, several shades create unique psychological reactions in people. The food industry including Coca-Cola and McDonald's uses red extensively because this hue promotes both urgency and excitement in consumers (Labrecque & Milne, 2019). Blue represents a reliable and trustworthy choice for financial institutions such as PayPal and Chase Bank so it tends to be preferred in sectors that need high consumer trust

according to Singh (2006). The colour green serves as a branding tool for Starbucks and Whole Foods since it signals their eco-friendly and wellness-centred approach to business (Aslam, 2006).

The way people perceive colour depends significantly on their age together with gender and cultural background as per Madden et al. (2000). Research shows that consumers under thirty years old prefer vibrant colours whereas those thirty or older choose mellow shades because their colour processing abilities vary (Kaya & Epps, 2004). Different cultures throughout the world display divergent emotional interpretations because white has different symbolic meanings according to Western values versus Asian traditions (Schmitt & Simonson, 1997). Gender differences affect colour preferences since women tend toward soft colours while men gravitate toward intense contrasting choices according to Khouw (2002). Brand colour selection becomes more effective by understanding how different groups react to colour stimuli.

2.2. Branding Strategies and Customer Loyalty

Brand consistency together with brand identity stands essential for achieving both consumer trust and loyalty (Keller, 2020). Brand identity requirements can be strengthened with logo design elements along with matchless typography and uniform colour schemes to help consumers express an emotional bond with brands (Aaker, 2012). Maintenance of identical brand materials between all platforms leads to higher brand recognition together with better credibility which produces loyal customers over the long term (Kapferer, 2012).

Brand consistency studies reveal its direct role in creating customer loyalty according to research examples. The Coca-Cola brand has kept its red and white branding intact for many years which has allowed consumers to develop both familiarity and confidence with the company (Müller et al., 2013). Through its classic black, white and silver branding Apple establishes sophistication and innovative character that supports its premium brand perception (Park et al., 2013). Brand recall together with repeat purchases strengthens when organizations maintain the same branding across packaging advertising and digital marketing platforms (Foroudi et al., 2018).

According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) brand trust acts as a vital connection between the stability of branding and customer loyalty retention. Consumers feel trust due to familiar

branding elements so they tend toward repeat purchases of the same brand instead of picking competitors according to Erdem & Swait (2004). Brand identity adaptations performed too often by companies result in diminished brand equity together with a loss of customer loyalty (Keller, 2020).

2.3. Demographic Influences on Branding Perception

People react differently to branding aspects especially colours because their reactions depend on age group and gender combined with cultural background (Madden et al., 2000). The data shows that established trust with consumers through familiarity affects older generations more strongly than it does younger generations because they easily recognize new trends according to Kotler & Keller (2022).

Various gender-related factors influence how people perceive the branding process. Blue together with black and grey catch the attention of men but women tend toward gentle shades including pink and pastel hues along with purple (Khouw, 2002). Brands use this consumer behaviour research to develop targeted advertising campaigns such as Victoria's Secret employing pink to address its main female audience and Nike connecting with a diverse performance-oriented audience through black and bold colour schemes.

The way brands look at the world is fundamentally altered by the cultural environment in which consumers reside. Westerners link red to romantic feelings and enthusiasm yet in China red colour conveys good fortune and wealth according to Huang and Lu (2013). The Western association of green with nature and sustainability differs from Middle Eastern areas where green holds religious connotations (Aslam, 2006). Marketable brands entering worldwide networks need to recognize distinctive cultural colour meanings because they help prevent miscommunications while deepening their market interactions (Madden et al., 2000).

2.4. Existing Gaps in Research

The scholarly investigation emphasizes branding elements along with colour psychology yet researchers lack quantitative research that evaluates branding colour effects on customer loyalty for different population segments (Labrecque & Milne, 2019). Most existing studies depend on theoretical research combined with qualitative data evaluation methods that restrict their ability to generalize findings. A survey-based quantitative approach serves this research

to fill the identified gap through statistical analysis of branding colours' influence on consumer trust and repeat purchase behaviour.

3. Rationale and Research Questions

3.1. Rationale for Study

This study investigates the influence of branding colours and consistency on customer loyalty through a quantitative survey with experiment-style elements. Initially, qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews were considered; however, a quantitative approach was chosen due to several key advantages:

- Feasibility and Efficiency – Conducting and transcribing qualitative interviews with a large number of participants would be time-consuming and impractical, particularly given the researcher's remote study conditions.
- Larger Sample Size – A survey enables data collection from a larger and more diverse participant pool, improving the generalizability of the findings compared to a limited number of qualitative interviews.
- Objective Measurement of Variables – Unlike qualitative interviews, which rely on subjective interpretations, a survey allows for standardized measurement of emotional associations, brand trust, and purchasing behaviour through validated Likert-scale items and controlled experimental manipulations.

To strengthen the study, experiment-style elements have been integrated into the survey. Participants will evaluate brands with manipulated colour variations and rate their likelihood of purchasing on a 7-point Likert scale. This approach enables a more controlled investigation of the causal relationship between brand colour, consistency, and customer loyalty, bridging the gap between traditional surveys and experimental research.

3.2. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following key research questions:

i. How do different brand colours influence consumer emotions and purchasing decisions?

ii.   What is the relationship between brand consistency (logos, typography, colours) and customer trust and loyalty?

iii.   To what extent does brand colour consistency impact purchase decisions in a controlled evaluation setting?

iv.   How do demographic factors (age, gender, culture) influence consumer responses to branding colours and consistency?

4. Aims and Objectives

4.1. Aim

This study aims to quantitatively examine the impact of branding colours and brand consistency on consumer emotions, trust, and purchasing behaviour by integrating experiment-style elements into the survey.

4.2. Objectives

i.   To measure consumer emotional responses to different brand colours and identify how these associations influence purchasing decisions.

ii.   To evaluate the role of brand identity and consistency (logos, typography, colour schemes) in building consumer trust and long-term loyalty.

iii.   To assess the impact of brand colour consistency on consumer purchasing behaviour by using experiment-style survey questions where participants evaluate brands with manipulated colour variations.

iv.   To analyse demographic influences (age, gender, and cultural background) on brand colour perception and purchasing intent.

5. Research Design

5.1. Design

The research implements a quantitative survey approach that uses a between-subjects experimental design for examining the cause-effect relationship between brand colour

consistency and consumer loyalty. The study assigns participants randomly to either Group A for testing brand uniformity or Group B for brand inconsistency testing.

Consistent Branding Condition (Group A):

- Test the hypothetical brand "ZENITH" by analyzing its use of uniform colours while maintaining consistent logos and text design elements among all communication points including the company logo business advertisements and product packaging.

Inconsistent Branding Condition (Group B):

- A research study should analyze a brand identity that uses various colour combinations between different touchpoints (logo in blue with advertisements in red and packaging in green).

The participants from both conditions will rate their trust levels, purchasing intentions, and brand loyalty through seven-point rating scales after finishing the experiment. The research design intercepts colour consistency to maintain the survey approach's generalizability (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

Key Components of the Survey:

- **Brand Evaluation (Experimental Manipulation):**

The participants assess brand materials that have been changed (between consistent and inconsistent variations) for the purpose of establishing causal relationships.

- **Emotional Connections (IV):**

The survey includes Likert-scale questions designed to evaluate emotional colour associations through survey-based methods (e.g., "Which emotions do you associate with [colour]?").

- **Consumer Behavior (DVs):**

The researchers calculated reliability by averaging questions Q9 through Q11 and questions Q12 through Q13 to determine trust and loyalty scores (Saunders et al., 2019).

The hybrid method exploiting experimental accuracy alongside survey speed allows researchers to fill the literature gap that Section 2.4 highlighted.

Variable Mapping Table:

Variable Type	Operationalization	Example Survey Items

IV: Brand Consistency	Experimental manipulation (Group A vs. B)	*Assigned by design; no direct question.*
IV: Colour Emotions	Likert-scale (1–5)	*"Rate how [cooler] makes you feel (Trust/Excitement)."* (Q6)
DV: Trust	Composite score (Avg. Q9–Q11, 7-point scale)	*"This brand feels trustworthy."* (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)
DV: Loyalty	Composite score (Avg. Q12–Q13, 5-point scale)	*"How likely are you to repurchase?"* (1=Never, 5=Always)

5.2. Materials

This research will utilize online survey tools such as Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, or Qualtrics to securely collect and store data from participants. These platforms facilitate seamless distribution and real-time data collection, ensuring efficient participant engagement and data management (Evans & Mathur, 2018).

The survey will incorporate a validated psychological marketing scale to ensure reliability and consistency in measuring consumer emotions, brand trust, and purchasing behaviour (Krosnick & Presser, 2010). The questionnaire will include:

- Brand colour preference questions to assess emotional associations with different colours.
- Likert-scale items measuring brand consistency, trust, and purchase intent.
- Experiment-style brand evaluations, where participants will assess brands with manipulated colour variations and rate their likelihood of purchasing on a 7-point scale (1 = extremely unlikely, 7 = extremely likely).
- Demographic questions (age, gender, cultural background) to analyse segmentation patterns in consumer responses.

The survey is designed to be completed within 7-10 minutes, balancing depth of analysis with participant engagement to maximize response rates and data quality.

5.3. Participants and Data Sources

A total of **100 participants** (50 for each experimental status) will be recruited to establish sufficient statistical power to identify the effect between the brands. The sample size was installed by an independent T-test (impact size = 0.5, α = 0.05, power = 0.8) using G*-power (Fall et al., 2007) using a primary effect analysis, indicating the minimum requirement of 64 individuals in total (32 each). To reduce potential attraction and guarantee extensive research it will list 50 individuals per group (n = 100 total).

Participants will be recruited using social media platforms, online forums, and construction tests to invite email to invite access and demographic diversity (Sounders et al., 2019).

Inclusion criteria:

Age: At least 18 years should be made to give informed consent to the participants.

Diversity: The study will continuously list volunteers with different backgrounds.

- Age groups (18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45+)

- Genders (female, male, non-binary/other)

- Cultural backgrounds (European, North American, Asian, etc.)

The sample size (n = 100) provides descriptive studies (e.g. comparison) and subordinate statistics (e.g. independent T-testing, regression models) to investigate the effect of branding stability on consumer confidence and loyalty (Field, 2018). The inclusion of different demographics improves the external validity of the results which facilitates subgrade analysis (Bryan, 2016).

5.4. Data Analysis Plan

The survey data collected will be examined using descriptive and subordinate data in SPSS and Microsoft Excel focusing on evaluating the causal connection between brand stability and consumer behavior.

Several methods of analysis including mean scores with frequency distributions and standard deviations will be computed to evaluate participant responses. A summary will present consumer emotional reactions to brand colours as well as their trust levels and purchase intentions.

5.4.1. Inferential Statistics

The required variables will be used:

- Means and standard deviations for Likert-scale answers (e.g. emotional relationships with colours, trust assessment).
- Frequency distribution to paint demographic trends (age, gender, cultural background).
- Cross accommodation for colour preferences is divided by the demographic group as a variety of variables.

This analysis will guarantee the summary of the participating answers and data integrity before the subordinate test.

5.4.2. Inferential Statistics

The analysis will be done to evaluate the hypotheses:

i. **Composite Scores for DVs:**

The dependent variables (trust, loyalty, procurement intention) will be calculated as an average of the same similar slide (e.g. trust = the fish of Q9-11) to increase credibility.

ii. **Group Comparisons (Experimental Conditions):**

Independent t-tests will evaluate group A (continuous branding) against independent T-test group B (incompatible branding):

- Confirmation (H1)
- Purchase intent (H3).

Effect sizes (Cohen's d) will measure the difference area (D for Cohen).

iii. **Moderator Analyses:**
- Several regressions will be considered whether demographics (age, gender) affect the effect of branding stability on loyalty (H4).
- Chi-square tests will evaluate the relationship between demographic groups and colour preferences (e.g. young participants favour lively colours?).

iv. **Correlational Analyses:**

Pearson's r will analyze correlations between

- Marking consistency and consumer loyalty (H2) assessment.
- Emotional reactions to colours and their influence on purchasing intentions.

Example Output Reporting:

Group A (continuous branding) had a larger level of confidence (M = 5.2, SD = 1.1) compared to group B (m = 3.8, SD = 1.3; T (98) = 2.41, p = 0.018, d = 0.48).

5.5. Procedure

The study will follow a structured data collection and analysis process to ensure validity and reliability.

Survey Pilot Testing

- The pilot survey involves 10 to 15 participants to detect any challenges that may arise from survey questions, responses and user interface.
- The distribution of the survey will be preceded by implementing necessary updates stemming from participant feedback.

Full-Scale Survey Distribution

- The finalized survey will be shared through social media, email, and online consumer forums.
- Participation will be voluntary, ensuring ethical compliance.

Data Collection Period

- The survey will be open for 4-6 weeks to ensure a sufficient sample size of 100 participants.

Data Cleaning and Preparation

- Responses will be screened for incomplete or inconsistent data.
- Cleaned data will then be imported into SPSS and Excel for statistical analysis.

This systematic approach will ensure accurate and replicable results.

6. Ethics

This study will adhere to ethical guidelines to ensure participant protection and data integrity.

Informed Consent

Through prior complete study explanations, all participants can proceed with the survey. Every participant will understand the research purpose through objective definition and outcome expectations presented with voluntary participation (Saunders et al., 2019).

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Without exception, the system will operate with no traceable personal identification data. The collected data will be stored securely for research purposes alone while adhering to data protection regulations identified in Bryman (2016).

Right to Withdraw

Participants can withdraw at any stage without justifying. Withdrawal procedures will be outlined at the beginning of the survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ethics Approval

The research will be submitted for review and approval by the University Ethics Board to ensure compliance with ethical research standards.

7. Limitations

Despite its structured approach, the study has several limitations.

- The study's representativeness toward wider consumer populations becomes limited by using convenience sampling methods (Saunders et al., 2019).
- Survey data depends on participant self-assessment yet their assessments often differ from their genuine purchasing activities (Bryman 2016).

- The online collection of data produces findings that only capture digital buyer behaviour thus reducing their general value for in-person retail shopping (Evans & Mathur, 2018).

Future research should consider larger, randomized samples and mixed-method approaches to enhance validity.

8. Timeline

Phase	Tasks	Start Date	End Date
Topic Selection and Proposal Development	Identify topic, conduct literature search, finalize research questions, design survey, submit ethics application and proposal	2025-02-01	2025-03-10
Literature Review and Survey Preparation	Conduct an in-depth literature review, refine survey questions through pilot testing, and finalize the data collection strategy	2025-03-15	2025-04-10
Data Collection and Cleaning	Distribute survey, collect responses, download and clean quantitative data	2025-04-15	2025-04-30
Data Analysis and Results Writing	Perform statistical tests in SPSS and MS Excel, write results section with tables and graphs	2025-05-01	2025-05-30
Discussion and Conclusion	Compare findings with literature, discuss results, evaluate research methodology, finalize conclusion	2025-06-01	2025-06-30
Final Draft and Submission	Submit draft for feedback, implement revisions, proofread, format, finalize references, submit a dissertation	2025-07-01	2025-07-15

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10.   Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographic Information

(This section helps analyse differences in responses based on demographic factors.)

1. **What is your age group?**
   - o 18-24
   - o 25-34
   - o 35-44
   - o 45-54
   - o 55+
2. **What is your gender?**
   - o Male
   - o Female
   - o Non-binary / Prefer not to say
3. **What is your highest level of education?**
   - o High school
   - o Associate degree
   - o Bachelor's degree
   - o Master's degree
   - o Doctorate
   - o Other (please specify) _____
4. **What is your cultural background?** (To assess cultural influences on colour perception.)
   - o North American
   - o European
   - o Asian
   - o African
   - o Middle Eastern
   - o Latin American
   - o Other (please specify) _____
5. **Digital consent form** (shortened version with checkboxes):
   - o I agree to participate voluntarily (18+ years).
   - o My responses will remain anonymous.
   - o I understand I can withdraw anytime.
   - o Other (please specify) _____

Section 2: Brand Colour Preferences & Emotional Responses

(This section assesses emotional associations with different brand colours.)

6. **Which brand colour(s) do you find most appealing?** (Select up to 3.)
   - o Red
   - o Blue
   - o Green
   - o Yellow

- o Black
- o White
- o Purple
- o Orange

7. **What emotions do you associate with the following colours?** (Select all that apply.)

Colour	Trust	Excitement	Relaxation	Luxury	Energy	Creativity	Other (Specify)
Red	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	_____
Blue	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	_____
Green	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	_____
Yellow	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	_____
Black	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	_____

8. **To what extent do brand colours influence your purchase decisions?** (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much)
   - o 1
   - o 2
   - o 3
   - o 4
   - o 5

9. **Group A (Consistent Branding):**
   - o **Image 1**: ZENITH logo (blue/white).
   - o **Image 2**: ZENITH product packaging (matching blue/white).
   - o **Image 3**: ZENITH advertisement (matching blue/white).

   Group B (Inconsistent Branding):

   - **Image 1**: ZENITH logo (blue/white).
   - **Image 2**: ZENITH product packaging (green/black).
   - **Image 3**: ZENITH advertisement (red/yellow).

Section 3: Brand Consistency and Customer Trust

(This section examines whether brand consistency affects consumer trust and purchasing behaviour.)

10. **How important is brand colour consistency when recognizing a brand?** (1 = Not important, 5 = Very important)
    - o 1
    - o 2
    - o 3
    - o 4
    - o 5

11. **Do you feel more trust towards brands that maintain consistent branding (colours, logos, typography) across all platforms?**
    - ○ Strongly Disagree
    - ○ Disagree
    - ○ Neutral
    - ○ Agree
    - ○ Strongly Agree

12. **Imagine you are choosing between two similar brands. One keeps its brand colours consistent, while the other frequently changes them. Which brand are you more likely to trust and purchase from?**

- The brand that maintains consistent colours
- The brand that frequently changes colours
- No difference in my preference

13. **On a scale from 1 to 7, how likely are you to purchase from a brand based on its colour consistency?** (1 = Not likely, 7 = Very likely)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

14. Trust:

- **1."How trustworthy is ZENITH?"**
  (1 = Not at all trustworthy, 7 = Extremely trustworthy)
  2. Loyalty:
- **"Would you recommend ZENITH to others?"**
  (1 = Not at all, 5 = Definitely)
  3. Purchase Intent:
- **"How likely are you to buy a ZENITH product?"**
  (1 = Extremely unlikely, 7 = Extremely likely)

Section 4: Customer Loyalty and Repeat Purchases

(This section assesses the relationship between branding and long-term customer loyalty.)

15. How often do you repurchase from brands that use colours you find visually appealing? (1 = Never, 5 = Always)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

- 5

16. How likely are you to recommend a brand that has a strong and consistent colour scheme? (1 = Not likely, 5 = Extremely likely)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

17. What emotions do you associate with ZENITH's branding?

Colour	Trust	Excitement	Luxury	Other (specify)
Blue	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	_____
Red	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	_____
Green	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	_____

Section 5: Additional Comments (Optional)

18. Would you like to share any additional thoughts on how branding colours affect your purchasing decisions?
(Open-ended response box provided.)