

# P/O/P TIMES

Vol. 18, No. 12 • December 2005 / An Official News Publication of the In-Store Marketing Institute / INSTOREMARKETER.ORG

## Emerging Color Trends for '06

Experts forecast muted colors, will marketers find a use for them?

By Jo McIntyre & Julia Steinberger

Color builds an emotional response and sometimes defines a brand. So what will be the hot colors for 2006? Recent reports forecast that designers and consumers are ready for a break from the brights and bolds.

"Designers have taken a deep breath for 2006," says Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute and author of *The Pantone Guide to Communicating With Color*. Pantone's report for Spring 2006, culled from a survey of top fashion designers, relayed a Top 10 list of muted shades with comfort-food names like "French Vanilla" and "Clove."

But just how much can this trend-shift impact P-O-P? Marketers in many non-fashion categories may feel inclined to sidestep a trend in calming-down. After all, the objective for most is to stand out at retail.

"I think it's important to include timely colors in your displays," says Doris Cray, former president of the Color Marketing Group (CMG), Alexandria, Va., and president of ProStrong, a cosmetics company. "Trendy colors can play a crucial supporting role to the bright colors that attract shoppers to your brand."

CMG, a not-for-profit organization of internationally-based color professionals, prepared its report on consumer color directions for 2006 around six central themes that indicate how a strategic choice of color can create a mood for your product.

With an emphasis on extravagance, serenity and the balance of urban lifestyle with nature, the color directions

for 2006 are summed up in the CMG report with titles like "Techno-Organic Balance" and "Hybrid." The report then organizes its 30 trend colors according to the industry where they would be most effective.

Eiseman says she expects marketing and displays to go the way of fashion as savvy graphic designers look to the fashion market for inspiration. "Certainly in packaging and displays, you always have to have some degree of brights just to catch attention," Eiseman says. But because these calmer colors elicit such a pleasant emotional response in consumers, many brands have already begun to experiment with ways that they can incorporate a more soothing palette into their presentation at retail while still maintaining brand integrity.

Colors don't necessarily have to be loud to call attention, even in a crowded supermarket. Says CMG president Charles Smith, recalling an effective example, "Using color out of context is an extremely important way to get attention to a product. Minute Maid, several years ago, introduced black-and-orange into the primarily orange-colored orange juice aisle, and then all of a sudden their product stood out more than anyone's."

Cray voiced her excitement for the duality of color offered by two-tone pigments. "I think the iridescents, if properly used, can really help point-of-purchase displays, because they're reflecting and changing color, and people are drawn to them because of the movement," she says.

"What I have seen, is that there is a use of color beyond simply the brand," says lifestyle wellness expert Terra Wellington. "Consumers are actually a little smarter now, and the research is better in terms of what color does for you. Certainly your logo will have the same look, and oftentimes the same color. But now you are using color in other ways to reflect the benefits of your product, or the scent, or the ingredients."

Wellington cites as examples a variation line of Vaseline Intensive Care lotions that contain herbal or botanical scents known for specific calming properties. The lotion bottles are colored the color of their ingredients, or a pale, cool variation of that color.

Wellington says that research has shown that the consumer looking for a soothing product will be drawn to the cool, soothing colors even before she registers the name of the brand.

Tim Ross, principal with Seattle-based retail branding firm Kendall Ross, works with retailers in malls. They use color to draw people in, he says, citing brands like Victoria's Secret, Abercrombie and Fitch, Brooks Brothers and Kenneth Cole, which he believes use different colors to attract a particular kind of customer. "These colors reflect the buyers' interest in

**kendall ross**

brand development+design

1904 Third Avenue, Suite 1005 Seattle, Washington 98101 USA

+1 206 262.0540  
PHONE

+1 206 262.0693  
FAX

[www.kendallross.com](http://www.kendallross.com)

what they want to say about themselves or their lifestyle.”

Ross sees teal blue, oranges and deeper colors at upscale department store Saks Fifth Avenue, while earth tones predominate at REI, an outdoor equipment store aimed at a more outdoorsy customer. “[The colors in the store are] the way the demographic identifies itself,” he says.

“It’s all about combinations,” agrees Eiseman, “and how those combinations get across a specific mood. So you as a retailer, or a P-O-P designer, you have to know what it is you’re trying to sell with your product, what it is you’re saying or trying to say to the ultimate consumer.”

For example, to indicate to consumers that your product is clean and fresh, she explains that a palette including blues, blue-greens, whites and clear would serve as an automatic indicator of purity.

The power of color combinations to

shift moods helped a team of international color consultants organize the annual Colour Futures study for ICI Paints, Storyville, Ohio. Their 2006 edition presented high-contrast palette guidelines against five “Lifestyle Themes,” which included “Stylized Simplicity,” “Active Contrast,” “Atmosphere,” “Extravagance” and “Reconstruction.”

Big box retailers should take note, as color can also define the environment where a product is presented. A successful color scheme can put shoppers at ease, ultimately encouraging them to take their time and stay in the store longer.

Wal-Mart is currently refurbishing stores with light blue and dark blue signs hung from the ceiling to guide buyers. “It’s navigational, rather than a fashion statement,” says Rob Neiler, partner and executive creative director, Eric Mower and Associates, Buffalo, N.Y. “It was difficult to calm down

and navigate the stores. They are making more demands of their brands to calm down the color palette.”

“A true sign of somebody who is not with the times is if you go into a mass retailer, and it’s still the white walls department store, and they haven’t done anything,” says Wellington.

Thinking beyond traditional color boundaries can help you keep your brand looking fresh to style-conscious consumers. Eiseman pointed to the introduction of blues in food marketing, and also the recent revival of pink for men, as examples of non-traditional shifts in colors for consumer goods.

“Younger consumers are looking for edgier treatment of color than perhaps their mothers or grandmothers were when they are out shopping,” Eiseman says. “Their expectation is that if you do the same-old look all the time, then you’re not very modern in your approach; you’re kind of a fuddy-duddy.” ■



These images appear in the ICI Paints Colour Futures 2006 book to illustrate the various color combinations and themes for the new year.

**kendall ross**  
brand development+design

1904 Third Avenue, Suite 1005 Seattle, Washington 98101 USA

+1 206 262.0540  
PHONE

+1 206 262.0693  
FAX

[www.kendallross.com](http://www.kendallross.com)