

Color Analysis on Contemporary Romanian Fashion: Example of Alexandra Șipa, Pif Stephano, Alexandru Floarea

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Abstract: *Color, one of the most important factors of the fashion industry, has developed together from the past to the present as one of the areas where the person can express himself best. Color creates a strong cultural language by conveying economic, social, political, etc. messages that reveal how we relate to our world and ourselves throughout history.*

As one of the most important elements of design, color is the crucial point of the collection they prepare especially for fashion designers. The colors determined by independent color companies and fashion forecasting companies before the start of each season can be the most important starting point of the fashion collections prepared.

Colors have a great importance in preparing unique and trendy collections for fashion designers. In this research, the analysis of colors in the contemporary Romanian fashion sector is handled specifically for the collections of fashion designers and how colors are reflected in the design process is examined. At this point, answers were sought to questions such as why some colors are chosen instead of others in production and consumption, collections, what does this choice depend on and what meanings it means. At the same time, the colors, usage patterns and reasons used by Romanian fashion designers in the products in their collections were revealed and analyzes were made specific to some products in the collection.

Keywords: *colour; fashion design; trends; Romanian fashion;*

1. Introduction

Today, rapid changes are experienced in fashion formations and consumption patterns. This constant change, arising from the dynamic nature of people, pushes designers to seek new ones, so the elements that make up fashion and color have to renew themselves. Color, one of the most important elements that shape human taste, directly establishes the bridge between the designer and the user.

To cope with the ever-changing world, marketing segmentation and targeting techniques are evolving rapidly from traditional, static, demographic-based criteria to dynamic, mood, lifestyle, and psychographic effects³.

Fashion design describes the spirit of the time to which it belongs, the lifestyle dynamics and people of the era with clothes. Fashion reflects the aesthetic understanding of the period with its clothing forms, fabrics, patterns, textures and colors in the male/female silhouettes it reshaped with the concept it created. Basic design elements and methods are also valid in the fashion design process. They are an important part of the design processes of fashion designers as well as in basic art. At this point, color is one of the important elements of design.

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³ Ahuja, N. K. 2021. *Concept of Fashion*. New Delhi: Publishers Grid. p.48

Color is the most exciting design element that always attracts people. Color is the basic building block of visual symbols. It is one of the most important elements of fashion design, as it is the first thing noticed in a garment. In this regard, clothes are usually chosen because of their color⁴⁻⁵.

One of the tools we use most often to express ourselves with different colors is clothes. Clothes allow us to reflect the effect of the color we carry.

People use colors to express their social identities, hierarchies, emotions, political leanings, personal identities, self-images, and aesthetic tastes. Clothing color conveys values, attitudes, personalities, and tendencies towards conformity or individuality⁶⁻⁷.

From a fashion perspective, clothing is our first social interface. Clothing functions as an important and necessary social tool that interfaces our bodies with society⁸.

The function of colors today is to bring visibility, power, emotion and recognizability to the proposals, to separate them from the background noise consisting of mixed styles, hybrids, mixtures and positioning of visual relations, and to play an identity role among them⁹.

Color perception and color psychology influence people's behavior in such a way that the symbolism of colors resonates with people's perceptions and therefore associates them with information from their culture¹⁰.

Colors have been an important means of communication in symbolic thinking, giving messages, artistic works and conveying the feelings and thoughts of individuals in society in different geographies and cultures. Color also symbolizes abstract concepts and thoughts, expressing the world of imagination, wishes and desires; reminds time and space and can produce visual responses. Today, the symbolism of color has left its place to functional use, because color alone can send messages, direct behaviors and have an effect on human physiology. It has been understood that colors, which have different meanings from each other, have a close relationship between human behavior and colors have gained great importance in many areas of life such as business life, architecture, fashion, art and health.

The meaning of colors differs according to the historical process and the periods experienced by different cultures. The effect of colors differs in cultures (Table 1): a color may be positive in one culture and negative in another. In some cultures, it has been observed that the perception of a color overlaps exactly. For example, in Africa the color black represents the good spirit and is purely positive, while for people in Europe, it represents negative things. While the color white represents purity and goodness for Europeans, it symbolizes evil spirit for Africans and means clean and pure for Asians.

In many societies, the application of color in national elements has become an important part of national culture.

There are many different aspects that differ across cultures because clothing and symbols may look just like them. Color is another aspect and the coexistence of different colors is socially constructed; Different colors have different meanings and symbolic

⁴ Anitha, D. 2005. *Fashion and Apparel Designing Fashion and Garment Making*. State Institute of Vocational Education Directorate of Intermediate Education Govt of Andhra Pradesh Hyderabad. p. 22

⁵ Yu, Hui-Chih. 2014. "A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Symbolic Meanings of Color". *Chang Gung Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 7(1): 49-74.

⁶ Breward, Christopher. 2003. *Fashion: Oxford History of Art*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁷ Wolfe, Mary. G. 2012. *Fashion*. Tinley Park, USA: Goodheart-Willcox Co.

⁸ Barnard, Malcolm. 2014. *Fashion Theory: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

⁹ Pompas, Renata and Luzzatto, Lia. 2006. "Identitary Colour and Fashion". AIC South Africa 2006, "Colour in Fashion and Colour in Culture" Proceedings of the Interim Meeting of the International Colour Association, South Africa. p.102.

¹⁰ Chinoperekweyi, Justine, Casas, Maria Carina. 2019. "Color Psychology and Its Influence on Consumer Buying Behavior: A Case of Apparel Products". *Saudi Journal of Business and Management Studies* 4(5): 441-456.

representations in cultures¹¹. With the use of color, you can move people and get your message across.

Table 1. Colors and Cultural Meanings

Color	Cultural Meanings
Red	Red can have several meanings, some of these are: danger, passion, heat, romance and importance, which are a common association in the West. In the Hindu religion, it however symbolizes joy and creativity, which is associated to the Hindu goddess Durga and is therefore the color of wedding garments ¹² . While in Asian cultures, red is a color that symbolizes prosperity, celebration and happiness.
White	White is often interlinked to innocence, simplicity and purity in West, which is why most wedding dresses in the west are worn in white. However, in other cultures, such as the Indian culture and Asian culture, it is the color of mourning and at the same time the universal symbol of sophistication.
Black	Black is associated with power, sophistication and mystery. Western culture would say that black is never out of fashion even though the color is associated with negativity, tragedy and bad luck across many cultures and worn during mourning.
Blue	Blue is considered calming, which is why in certain cultures it is known as the color of mourning. However, in Greece and the Middle East blue is used to ward off the evil eye, and in India it represents beginnings and happiness. At the same time, blue is related to depression in the west, which is why “feeling blue” is an expression that is used when feeling down. The color can however also represent trust, security and authority in the Western culture.
Green	As green is associated with nature and grass it is also a universal symbol for safety. In western cultures green represents luck, wealth, spring and freshness. As green is considered to be relaxing across many cultures it has recently been associated with ecological and environmental issues. In the Middle East green represents luck and wealth, and has been considered as the traditional color of Islam.
Purple	Purple indicates wealth and power in Japan, and is the color of royalty in the west while it can be associated to creativity. Purple is also associated with faith and penitence in Catholicism, however in Brazil it is the color of mourning.
Orange	Orange is a color that in the west is considered a happy and social color that represents autumn. In Hinduism orange is considered to be sacred and auspicious.
Yellow	In the West yellow is considered as a cheerful color that signifies hope and happiness, but it can also be a color of warning when combined with black. In North Africa, it is said that yellow conveys good fortune.
Pink	Pink is associated with femininity and romance and said to be stimulating.
Grey	Grey is associated with intellect, authority and conservatism. As it's a fashion staple it is often used in men's business suits. However, in the west grey can also be associated with pessimism, which is why the term is called “grey day”.

Source of table:^{13_14_15}

¹¹ Gage, John. 2000. *Colour and Meaning: Art, Science and Symbolism*. London: Thames & Hudson.

¹² Joshi, O. P. 1992. *Continuity and Change in Hindu Women's Dress*, in R. Barnes & J. B. Eicher (eds.) *Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning*. London: Berg Publishers.

¹³ Feisner, E. Anderson. 2001. *Colour: How to Use Colour in Art and Design*. London: Laurence King.

¹⁴ Wang, C. 2015. “Symbolism of Colors and Color Meanings Around the World”. <https://www.shutterstock.com/blog/color-symbolism-and-meanings-around-the-world>

¹⁵ Alexandersson, Elin, Matlak, Rasha. 2017. “Cultural Differences in Fashion Magazines – Targeting Vogue”. Thesis for Master, The Swedish School of Textiles, University of Borås. p.13-14

The fashion industry needs tools to identify and forecast color market demand. A team of researchers at color trend forecasting agencies, made up of designers, sociologists, psychologists, marketing experts, and other experts, analyze consumption and behavior by hypothesizing about chromatic appreciation trends two years in advance to allow time for industrial production.

Today it is believed that color cards no longer have an internal predictive and guiding function, but always take on a valid function of highlighting certain themes among many simultaneously present in a more global, unstable and uncontrolled market.

Color palettes are often used to distinguish one fashion from another because colors are strongly associated with emotions. Normally, designers associate the emotional impact of colors only with consumer appeal, but colors can cause a range of emotions (calmness, anger, excitement, etc.)¹⁶. As Bortoli and Maroto (2001)¹⁷ stated, it is very important to analyze the effect of color on consumers of different cultures and how each perceives them.

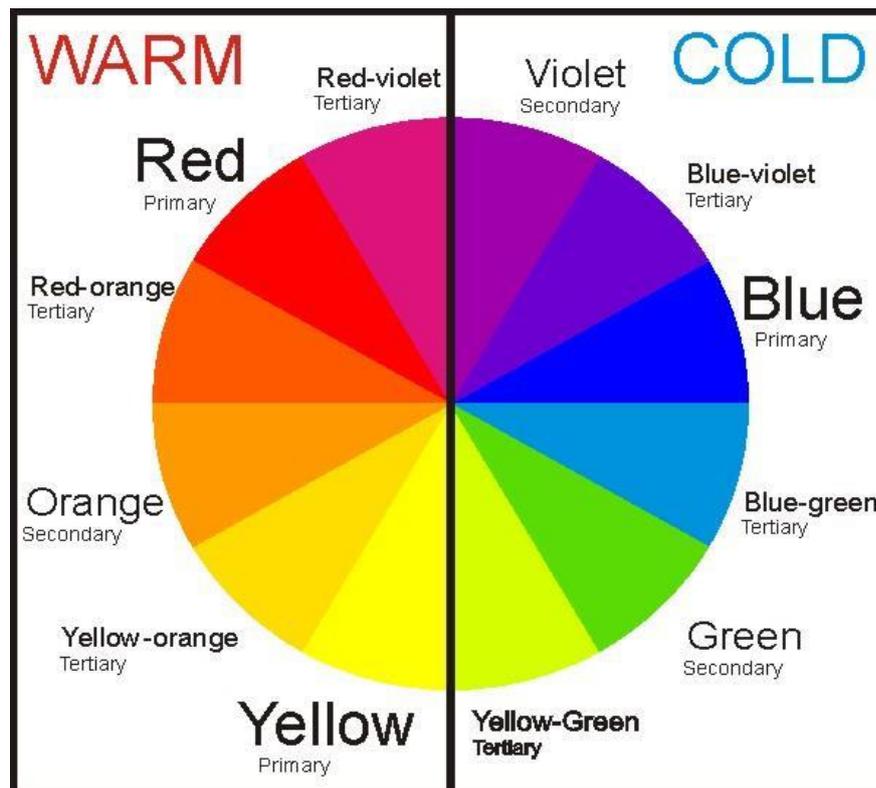


Figure 1. Color in Fashion Source of image:

<https://www.westada.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=270237&dataid=285872&FileName=Color%20in%20Fashion%20PPT.pdf>

Color has always been important in the fashion industry and has entered our everyday language to enliven images of certain garments suitable for certain occasions: the little black dress, the crisp white shirt, the perfect jeans, the sober gray suit¹⁸. Such relationships between

¹⁶ Battaïola, André Luiz. 2006. *Adding Other Values to Colors Besides Fashion*. AIC South Africa 2006, "Colour in Fashion and Colour in Culture" Proceedings of the Interim Meeting of the International Colour Association, South Africa. p.111.

¹⁷ Bortoli, Mario De, and Maroto, Jesús. 2001. *Colours Across Cultures: Translating Colours in Interactive Marketing Communications*. Global Propaganda.

¹⁸ Best, Janet. 2017. *Colour Design. Theories and Applications*. (Second Edition), Woodhead Publishing.

color and clothing often cross-cultural boundaries. In this study, especially the use of color in the collections of Romanian fashion designers was discussed and aimed to introduce certain colors adopted by the fashion industry in recent years and why certain designers are associated with color signatures. At the same time, evaluations were made on the color life cycle and color change of designers in contemporary Romanian fashion.

2. Colors in Romanian Fashion

The design activity, which is the basis of fashion and which should exist in societies that can reach contemporary and cultural equipment, is carried out by fashion designers with scientific and technological knowledge, education and equipment at both the universal level and cultural and folkloric knowledge at the local level.

In the fashion sector, fashion designers prepare collections suitable for changing living conditions and certain periods. In a design process, a fashion designer needs to define the type of product he will design, the target audience he will address, research the concept, market and material for the collection he will produce, at the same time decide on the colors to be used and shape his collection accordingly.

Although different design elements are emphasized in the determined fashion trends each season, it is believed that people primarily react to color and attention is paid to color choices in designs. There are many reasons for this. Color is the first noticeable element because it is located on the surface of the garment, and at the same time, color; It is a symbolic expression tool in social and cultural communication¹⁹. Visual senses, especially in terms of color, have a universal influence in determining aesthetics²⁰.

Color perception is a social phenomenon associated with geography and climate and contains various messages in clothing. Pastoureau (2016)²¹ stated that it is society that creates color, gives it its definition and meaning, creates its codes and values, regulates its practices and determines its importance. Parallel to this, he underlines that colors are independent of time and space, that they do not have a common, universal symbolism in all civilizations, and on the contrary, he especially emphasizes that because the problems and discussions about colors are highly cultural, he does not allow the historian to play with the period and geographical areas.

In this context, when the collections and products of fashion designers in contemporary Romanian fashion are examined in terms of color use, it is possible to say that there are collections that are extremely creative and even have cultural traces. There are many fashion designers who shape contemporary Romanian fashion and prepare very original collections. When the collections of these designers are evaluated in terms of color use, it is possible to say that they have a very wide color scale and characteristic features.

¹⁹ Hines, Tony, Bruce, Margaret. 2001. *Fashion Marketing Contemporary Issues*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann. p. 23.

²⁰ Davies, N. 2015. "Feature: Colors of the Future: Color Psychology and Textile Aesthetic". *AATCC Review* 15(4): 41.

²¹ Pastoureau, Michel. 2016. *Siyah Bir Rengin Tarihi*. (M. Tufan, Çev.), Sel Yayıncılık. P. 27-29.



Photo 1. Alexandra Şipa Collection

Source of image: <https://alexandrasipa.com/AW21>
<https://www.elle.ro/fashion/10-designeri-romani-de-urmarit-in-2021-788815/attachment/alexandra-sipa-2?pid=788815>

When photograph 1 is examined, it will be seen that the products from Alexandra Şipa's collection are in very bold and vivid colors. In her second year at the prestigious Central Saint Martin's School of Art in London, Alexandra Şipa's situation suddenly changed and she suffered a break in one point. Later, with the idea of reusing colored yarns to make her creations, she started to produce products with different and original works. This unique approach soon became her trademark and her innovative pieces were published in famous fashion magazines such as Vanity Fair, Vogue and Dazed China.

The designer gives the emotional state she wants to make you feel, primarily with the choice of color. Colors are warm, cold, contrasting or harmonious; it also significantly governs our perception. When photograph 1 is examined, the most striking aspect of the collection is the use of colors in the pieces and the harmony of contrasting colors together. The designer uses colors in her collections with great success and this is reflected in all her collections.

The designer should choose the necessary fabric for the model, taking into account the texture feature. Different knitting patterns create very different surface textures in woven fabrics. These surface textures reflect light in different directions and amounts, creating various appearance effects. On the other hand, in woven and knitted fabrics made using colored yarns, knitting also undertakes the task of providing a suitable environment for the creation of various color effects. The bright or matte appearance of the colors on the fabric surface depends to some extent on the surface texture of the weave and the raw material properties. In order for the color to achieve the desired effect in textile design, together with the carrier material on which we apply it; form, material, place, time, light and environmental factors should be taken into consideration.



Photo 2. Alexandru Floarea Collection Source of image:

<https://www.westada.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=270237&dataid=285872&FileName=Color%20in%20Fashion%20PPT.pdf>

Products belonging to Alexandru Floarea are given in Photograph 2. Alexandru is a young designer who educated at the George Enescu National University of the Arts in Iași and is always characterized by a desire to find new forms of expression. He is a designer who experiments with compositions and structures with unconventional materials, thereby creating true works of art for those who want to test their limits without prejudice, without the cultural constraints of gender or beauty conventions.

The designer, who frequently uses black, one of the most noble colors in his collections, creates very original works by making use of the colorlessness of black. At the same time, many expressions can convey emotions such as sadness, passion, ambition, good looks, salvation, secrecy, power, elegance, grace.



Photo 3. Pif Stephano Collection

Source of image: <https://www.notjustalabel.com/pif-stephano>

In Photo 3, the designs of Ionuț Piscureanu are given. A graduate of the Faculty of Art and Design of Timișoara, Ionuț Piscureanu (alias Pif Stephano) is a young designer whose creations are always tied to reality and current events, and whose main inspiration is contemporary society and culture. Extremely bold collections are aimed at strong personalities who want to send a message.

Until the end of the 17th century, all the inhabitants of the Romanian Principalities seem to have used the same colors in clothing, the difference being made only in their solidity, brilliance and sparkle. However, Székely (2010)²², some recent research has noted that in the Principalities of Romania in the 16th and 17th centuries, the prevailing color for both men's and women's costumes appeared to be red. In this context, it may be possible to explain why Romanian fashion designers frequently include the color red in their collections.

The variety of traditional clothing items, the complexity of decorative motifs and the colors used quickly became a source of inspiration for fashion designers. The interest in Romanian tradition and craftsmanship is also found in Romanian designer collections. The designers, whose inspiration is the traditional Romanian costume and who create fashion collections specific to the colors used here, create quite original works. One of these designers is Adrian Oianu. He is a highly acclaimed Romanian designer who has launched two collections inspired by the traditional costumes of his country.

One of the artists who is passionate about nature and Romanian traditions is Oana Lupaș. Lupaș combines floral, animal and popular motifs in an innocent and playful way, creating timeless pieces with precision and tenderness.

²² Székely, Maria Magdalena. 2011. *Colour Garments: Tradition, Fashion or Social Mark? The Romanian Principalities in the 16th-17th Centuries*. From Traditional Attire to Modern Dress: Modes of Identification, Modes of Recognition in the Balkans (XVIth-XXth Centuries), Edited by: Constanța Vintilă-Ghiulescu, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Robert Moraru, (His aesthetic is gender-neutral, he wants to break down gender stereotypes, and his main inspirations are popular culture, notable historical personalities ..) Octavia Chiru (The pieces made from recycled and biodegradable materials like wool and cotton can be worn in countless ways, but they can also become decorative objects, especially tapestries, another of the designer's passion.), Lucian Arsen are among the designers who make designs with different color experiments and create collections in different original styles.

Recently, it has become extremely important which local fashion designers impress us and in what colors and themes they process their collections. Since consumer preferences are shaped and directed by what fashion designers do, this situation is important as a subject worth researching. In this context, the collections of contemporary Romanian fashion designers contain very impressive products, especially in terms of the colors they use, as they contain highly inspiring and original works.

3. Conclusion

Wearing clothes is a social norm. It can also function as a form of ornamentation and an expression of personal taste or style. As Kodžoman points out (2019)²³, it is intuitive to think of clothing as just a cover or a means of projecting our image onto other people, because clothing can also affect ourselves.

In today's society, both genders use color to enhance their visual and aesthetic appearance. The use of color has become an important communication. People use the color of clothing to express who they are, how they feel and what they believe; They also prefer to express their social identities, feelings, self-images and aesthetic pleasures.

Color, as an important stimulus in the context of human's physical, mental and psychological characteristics, contributes to human-object-environment harmony.

There are rapid changes in today's fashion formations. The constant change arising from the dynamic nature of people pushes designers to seek new ones. Therefore, fashion designers had to constantly renew the color and the elements that make up the color. Color, which is one of the most important elements shaping people's taste, greatly affects how the design has a character. Color establishes a psychological bond by building a bridge between the designer and the user.

Color determines the message that clothing, which is a visual communication tool, wants to convey to the other party. Color is an important design element in clothing design that determines the expressive power of clothing design. Fashion designers can reveal this design element by working on them for long periods before deciding on their collections and sometimes even acting as the starting point of the collection. When the collections in the contemporary Romanian fashion sector are examined, it is possible to say that very original products are presented and they are impressive in terms of the colors used.

²³ Kodžoman, Duje. 2019. "The Psychology of Clothing: Meaning of Colors, Body Image and Gender Expression in Fashion". *Text Leather Review* 2(2): 90-103.

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