

# Research on Career Apparel Design Based on Color Psychology

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## Abstract

From the perspective of color psychology, this paper examines how career-apparel design influences employee emotions, organizational image, and cross-cultural adaptation. The study finds that cool hues such as blue and green enhance concentration and a sense of security, making them suitable for finance and healthcare, whereas warm hues like red and orange stimulate energy and fit sales positions, provided overstimulation is avoided. Career-apparel color not only regulates employees' psychological states but also serves as a visual carrier of corporate culture, externally conveying a professional, credible, or innovative brand image. Moreover, cultural differences and industry characteristics impose divergent demands on color application; multinational firms must balance localization with psychological efficacy. The research recommends integrating digital technologies in future work to advance personalized and scientific career-apparel color design.

**Keywords:** Color Psychology, Career-Apparel Design, Employee Emotion, Organizational Image.

## Original Research Article

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a key visual symbol in the workplace, career apparel fulfills not only basic dress requirements but also functions as a cultural representation and externalization of social identity. Through unified silhouettes, colors, and styles, it silently strengthens employees' sense of group belonging and projects the organization's professional image and values. In contemporary workplaces, career apparel is no longer a mere product of occupational necessity; it has become an important carrier of corporate culture building and brand communication. Whether the dark suits of financial institutions, the light uniforms of the medical sector, or the relatively free, colorful combinations of creative industries, color has always served as one of the core elements of career-apparel design.

Color, the most immediate visual language, can convey information and evoke psychological associations in an instant. Psychological studies show that human color perception is not only a physiological reaction but also a psychological and cultural projection. Blue is often

associated with calmness, trust, and professionalism, helping to create a stable workplace atmosphere; red symbolizes passion and power and is therefore widely used in sales or marketing posts that require high energy; green represents balance and relaxation, suiting environments that demand sustained concentration or tension relief. These psychological effects make color choice in career apparel more than an aesthetic decision—it is a silent mode of communication that imperceptibly influences employees' emotional states and performance.

From the perspective of social interaction, the color of career apparel also fulfills the functions of identity recognition and social identification. Uniform colors allow organization members to establish group visibility in public, shaping a professional and standardized external image. For example, airline crew uniforms often use blue and red to balance professionalism and affinity; the white uniforms of medical institutions symbolize purity and trust, enabling patients to feel safe more easily. Thus, color not only affects individual psychological experience but also directly participates in

constructing organizational image and facilitating social interaction.

Under globalization and diversified workplace conditions, the role of color psychology in career-apparel design has become more prominent. On the one hand, international enterprises must seek common color meanings across multicultural contexts to avoid misunderstandings arising from cultural differences. For instance, white usually represents purity in the West but is associated with funerals in some Eastern cultures; red symbolizes auspiciousness and celebration in China but may carry warning connotations in certain Western contexts. On the other hand, as workplace atmospheres become more pluralistic and humanized, traditional single-tone designs can hardly satisfy employees' needs for individuality and emotional regulation. Therefore, how to balance aesthetics, psychology, and cultural differences in career-apparel design has become an urgent issue.

Exploring the guiding significance of color psychology for career-apparel design can provide enterprises with scientific color strategies, enhance employees' professional identity and emotional adjustment, and shape unique brand images in international competition. This research has practical and long-term significance for promoting career-apparel design from function and form toward deeper psychological and cultural values.

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How does the application of different colors in career apparel influence employees' emotions and psychological states?
- 2) What role does color coordination play in shaping organizational image and external perception in career-apparel design?
- 3) How can cultural differences, industry characteristics, and color psychological effects be balanced in career-apparel design?

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Influence of Different Colors on Employees' Emotions and Psychological States

Color, the most intuitive visual language, directly affects individual perception and psychological response. In career-apparel design, color is not only an aesthetic manifestation but also an important factor influencing employees' emotions, psychological states, and work performance. Studies show that different colors can trigger distinct psychological associations and behavioral reactions. For example, blue is often linked to calmness, trust, and professionalism, helping employees stay focused in high-pressure environments; red conveys enthusiasm and power but may also bring a certain tension (Li, 2022).

Zhang (2022) emphasized that color psychology provides new theoretical support for fashion design, enabling designers to subtly guide employees' psychology through scientific color schemes. For instance, green is widely used in medical career apparel because it brings balance and relief, reducing tension for both patients and medical staff. Zhao, Li, and Zhang (2024) further found from dance-performance costumes that color can directly affect emotions, a conclusion equally applicable to psychological regulation of employees in occupational settings.

Cheng (2024) proposed the "dopamine dressing" phenomenon, showing that bright color combinations can evoke positive emotional responses and improve individual psychological states and interpersonal interactions. This is particularly important in the post-pandemic workplace; many companies have introduced bright colors into uniforms to enhance employees' emotional health. Additionally, Chai (2008) pointed out that, in enterprises, senior executives tend to use dark colors to emphasize authority, whereas frontline employees wear bright colors to convey affinity, fully reflecting the close relationship between color and psychological states.

In summary, color can change individual emotional states and create team-level atmospheres. Through rational color selection, career apparel can become a hidden psychological intervention tool, promoting employees' mental health and work enthusiasm while supporting organizational culture building (Zhang, 2022; Li, 2022; Zhao et al., 2024; Cheng, 2024; Chai, 2008).

### 3.2 Role of Color Coordination in Organizational Image and External Perception

Career apparel is not only employees' personal clothing but also an important component of overall corporate image. As the first visual element, color often becomes a direct carrier for organizations to disseminate brand concepts and cultural connotations. Yu (2025) pointed out that scientific color application can strengthen brand personality and enhance consumer awareness and loyalty. In fierce markets, enterprises can convey values such as professionalism, reliability, or innovation through career-apparel color coordination, establishing a unique image in the public mind.

Zhao (2021) analyzed career-apparel color from the perspective of visual perception, emphasizing that color can shape corporate external image and enable the public to quickly recognize organizational attributes and professionalism. For example, financial companies widely adopt dark blue and gray to convey rationality and stability; medical institutions prefer white and light blue to express cleanliness and trust; creative industries tend to use diversified bright colors to strengthen openness and innovation (Zhao, 2021).

Moreover, Wang and Ge (2025) showed that applying color psychology in functional apparel can not only improve

comfort and practicality but also extend brand value. Color coordination has become an important means of differentiated competition. Zhao (2024) also illustrated that reasonable color and pattern selection can help enterprises convey unified value recognition to the outside world through employee images, forming stable public perception.

Liu (2023) emphasized that the digital era has brought more innovative possibilities for career-apparel color coordination. Digital tools and data-driven trends enable enterprises to accurately grasp target audiences' color preferences, achieving higher-level emotional transmission through career-apparel design. This not only strengthens organizational image but also makes career apparel an important link in brand marketing and cultural communication.

Therefore, career-apparel color coordination plays a core role in constructing organizational image and external cognition. It is not only an aesthetic choice but also a strategic tool, helping enterprises highlight characteristics in competition and establish emotional connections with the public (Yu, 2025; Zhao, 2021; Wang & Ge, 2025; Zhao, 2024; Liu, 2023).

### 3.3 Cultural Differences, Industry Characteristics, and Color Psychological Effects

With deepening globalization and cross-cultural communication, career-apparel design is no longer a pure clothing issue but a comprehensive embodiment of cultural symbols and industry characteristics. In different cultural backgrounds, people's understanding of color varies, directly affecting the interpretation of color psychological effects in career apparel. Wang (2024) took red-green coordination as an example: in traditional Chinese culture, red and green often imply auspiciousness and festivity, whereas in Western culture they are more regarded as holiday-limited colors. This reveals the complexity of career-apparel color design in cross-cultural environments, requiring designers to choose color schemes cautiously in international contexts.

Sun (2024) emphasized that career-apparel design must combine specific workplace scenes and cultural contexts. Multinational enterprises often face multiple interpretations of the same color in different cultures. For instance, white symbolizes purity and professionalism in Western societies but is associated with mourning in some Eastern cultures. This means career-apparel color application cannot rely solely on universal psychological laws but must be adjusted according to cultural customs.

Meanwhile, different industries have different color needs. Zhu (2021) pointed out that modern women's career apparel

needs to balance professionalism and individuality, highlighting occupational identity while satisfying women's pursuit of fashion. Color selection becomes key: dark blue conveys professionalism, whereas soft pink or beige expresses affinity and gentleness, helping women achieve multi-identity expression in the workplace.

Yang (2022) reviewed the development trend of business career apparel and noted that, with accelerated enterprise internationalization, career apparel must not only reflect corporate culture but also cater to aesthetic differences among countries. This difference makes career-apparel color design show diversified trends. For example, Asian companies prefer restrained colors to reflect stability, whereas European and American companies tend to use bold colors to convey innovation and confidence.

Dong (2018) emphasized that career apparel is gradually becoming cultural and fashionable. With the formation of career-apparel culture, color is no longer a single design element but an important tool for cultural communication. By translating traditional cultural elements, designers can introduce cultural symbols into career apparel, enhancing identity in cross-cultural communication. This not only improves aesthetic value but also expands communication effectiveness in international contexts.

In summary, career-apparel color psychological effects are constrained by both cultural differences and industry characteristics. Scientific color application must balance psychological laws and cultural backgrounds to satisfy employees' psychological needs while displaying organizational culture and industry attributes. This multi-level design logic reflects the complexity of career apparel as a cultural symbol and psychological medium (Wang, 2024; Sun, 2024; Zhu, 2021; Yang, 2022; Dong, 2018).

## 4. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a combination of literature review, case analysis, and practice. By retrieving domestic and foreign literature on color psychology and career apparel, the theoretical framework is sorted out to clarify the psychological basis of color effects on individual emotions and organizational image. Secondly, data on emotional experience and cognitive feedback of different colored career apparel are collected to reveal actual impacts on employees' psychological states. Typical enterprise career-apparel design cases are selected for comparative study from perspectives of color coordination, cultural context, and industry characteristics. Combined with practice, the multi-dimensional role of color psychology in career-apparel design is revealed, providing reference paths for future design.

5. RESEARCH PROCESS

5.1 Relationship between Color and Employee Psychological States

Table 1: Influence of Color on Employees’ Psychological States and Interpersonal Relations

Color	Industry/Position	Psychological Effect	Impact on Interpersonal Relations
Blue (navy, dark blue)	Finance	Calm, rational, focused	Builds trust & authority
Green	Healthcare, Education	Balance, relief, de-stress	Reduces patient/student anxiety
Red, orange (warm)	Sales & Marketing	Energy, charisma, positive mood	Increases extraversion & communication
Bright yellows, etc.	Creative sectors	Inspires creativity, relaxed vibe	Signals openness & friendliness

Source: Drawn by the researcher.

Color in career apparel is not only a visual choice but also directly affects employees’ psychological states and daily performance. Through questionnaires and interviews, employees from finance, medical, education, and creative industries were surveyed, focusing on how different colored career apparel influences emotions, attention, and interpersonal communication. Results show that blue tones are generally believed to bring calm and rational psychological cues, helping employees stay focused in high-pressure and high-risk environments; therefore, financial industry uniforms mostly use dark blue or navy. Green, symbolizing balance and relief, is prominent in medical and educational fields. Many medical staff and teachers reported that green uniforms not only eased their tension in high-intensity work but also reduced service recipients’ anxiety (see Table 1).

In contrast, warm tones such as red and orange perform well in sales and marketing positions. These posts require high vitality and appeal, and warm tones can strengthen positive

emotions and enhance outgoing and communicative abilities. However, some respondents pointed out that although red can improve work enthusiasm, long-term wearing may cause psychological tension or even increase anxiety. Bright colors such as yellow are favored by creative industry employees, who believe such colors can inspire creativity and create a relaxed atmosphere.

Interview results also indicate that career-apparel color has subtle effects on interpersonal communication. Dark uniforms help establish trust and authority in business negotiations, whereas light uniforms are more popular in service industries because they convey affinity and openness. Employees generally believe that career-apparel color not only affects their self-emotion regulation but also plays an invisible role in communication with clients and colleagues. Overall, color in career-apparel design is an effective psychological adjustment tool; different colors can shape different psychological atmospheres and influence employees’ emotional states and behaviors.

5.2 Influence of Color on Organizational Image and External Cognition

Table 2: External Color-Cognition Images across Industries

Industry	Dominant Colors	Values/Image Communicated	Color Effect	External Perception
Finance	Navy, black, grey	Rational, stable, authoritative	Staff appear trustworthy; firm seen as long-term stable	Reinforces professionalism & reliability
Healthcare	White + light blue	Clean, professional, serene	Eases patient anxiety, builds trust	Projects specialized image
Creative sectors	Bright yellow, orange, multi-color	Innovative, open, unique	High visibility, energizes	Public associates color with creativity & brand personality
Universal effect	/	/	Group identity & cultural projection	Professionalism & credibility rise together

Source: Drawn by the researcher.

Career apparel is not only employees’ daily clothing but also an important part of organizational image. As a direct externalization of corporate culture, it conveys different value concepts such as stability, professionalism, or innovation through color. In the research, career apparel from financial, medical, and creative enterprises were selected as cases. Results show that financial industry career apparel mainly uses dark blue, black, and gray, reflecting rationality, stability, and authority. This design not only makes employees appear more trustworthy to clients but also conveys the enterprise’s long-term steady development image (see Table 2).

The medical industry mostly uses white and light blue, emphasizing cleanliness and trust, helping to alleviate patients’ tension. Light blue conveys calmness and peace, while white symbolizes purity and professionalism; the combination has become iconic for hospitals and clinics. Through color selection, medical institutions not only shape a professional external image but also establish patients’ trust in medical services.

In contrast, creative industry career-apparel colors are more diversified. Design companies, media industries, and art institutions often choose bright or even jumping colors to demonstrate innovation, openness, and uniqueness. This

strategy can create differentiation in fierce market competition, allowing the public to associate enterprises with creativity and vitality through color. For example, some advertising companies use bright yellow and orange uniforms, increasing team visibility and shaping a positive brand personality.

The study also found that the influence of color on external cognition goes beyond aesthetics, involving the transmission of corporate culture and values. Unified career-apparel colors create strong group identity for employees in public, thereby strengthening corporate professionalism and credibility in the eyes of clients or partners. Meanwhile, differentiated color coordination can become an important component of competitive advantage. In brand communication and marketing, career-apparel colors often become part of the visual identity system, unifying with corporate logos and promotional tones to enhance overall recognition.

In summary, career-apparel color coordination plays a strategic role in organizational image and external cognition. It is both an external communication tool and an internal cultural cohesion method. Reasonable color design can help enterprises form unique impressions in the public mind and enhance market competitiveness.

### 5.3 Cross-Cultural and Industry-Specific Color Adaptation

Table 3: Color Adaptation Under Cross-Cultural and Industry Characteristics

Dimension	Key Finding	Typical Example	Design Strategy	Strategic Value
Cultural difference	Same color, opposite meaning	Multinational abandons all-white uniform in East-Asia market	Use neutral base or region-specific palettes	Avoid cultural misread, reduce brand risk
Industry trait	Color preference tied to sector identity	Law-firm navy suit vs ad-agency bright yellow jacket	Lock industry color range first, then fine-tune for culture	Instantly signals sector, boosts professional ID
Cross-impact	Culture + industry constraints	Asian finance branch: navy + warm accent	Main color meets industry need; accent fits local culture	Balance global consistency & local relevance
Global healthcare	Needs widest cultural common denominator	WHO etc. use light-blue worldwide	Select low-controversy cool/light hues	Ensures consistent patient trust worldwide
Corporate strategy	Color = global competition tool	MNCs adopt region-differentiated uniforms	Establish “global core + regional accent” flexible code	Enhances international adaptability & competitive edge

Source: Drawn by the researcher.

With accelerated globalization, career-apparel design increasingly needs to consider cross-cultural color adaptation. Different cultures may have completely different understandings of the same color, directly affecting career-apparel acceptance and communication effectiveness in international contexts. In the research, multinational enterprise career apparel were selected as cases, combining interviews and literature analysis to explore the impacts of

cultural differences and industry characteristics on color application(see Table 3).

First, regarding cultural differences, white usually symbolizes purity and professionalism in the West and is therefore common in medical and research uniforms. However, in some Eastern cultures, white carries mourning connotations, and direct transplantation may cause misunderstanding. Similar examples include red, which is

regarded as auspicious and festive in Chinese culture but may imply danger or warning in some Western contexts. These differences force multinational enterprises to adopt more neutral color schemes or launch differentiated designs in different regions.

Second, industry characteristics also significantly affect color adaptation. Finance and law industries emphasize rationality and authority, preferring dark career apparel; medical and education industries mostly use cool and light colors to emphasize professionalism and trust; creative and service industries are more willing to use bright or even jumping colors to demonstrate vitality and openness. These differences show that color is not a universal choice but is closely related to industry positioning and workplace atmosphere.

Additionally, the study found that cross-cultural and industry characteristics intersect in color adaptation. For example, multinational financial enterprises often add local warm color accents on the basis of dark blue in Asian branches to better adapt to local cultural psychology; international medical organizations tend to choose culturally non-controversial light blue in uniform design to ensure global acceptance.

Finally, cross-cultural adaptation is not only a design challenge but also part of corporate strategy. Reasonable color selection can help enterprises establish consistent professional images across cultural backgrounds while avoiding negative impacts from cultural misreading. The combination of industry characteristics and cultural differences makes career-apparel design an interdisciplinary issue, requiring solutions at the intersection of psychology, aesthetics, and cultural studies.

In summary, cross-cultural and industry-specific adaptation of career-apparel color is an indispensable part of corporate design strategy in the era of globalization. Scientific and flexible color strategies can not only meet the needs of different cultures and industries but also win broader recognition and competitive advantages for enterprises in international markets.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Research on the application of color psychology in career apparel shows that color is not only a visual symbol but also a deep psychological and cultural tool. Regarding impacts on employee psychological states, career-apparel color can directly affect individual emotions and behavioral responses. For example, blue and green are generally believed to bring calmness, balance, and stability, helping to improve employees' concentration and psychological security; red and orange, although activating vitality, may increase tension and anxiety when worn long-term. This dual effect indicates that career-apparel color design cannot pursue visual beauty alone but must also consider psychological needs and job characteristics to achieve optimal adaptation.

At the level of organizational image and external cognition, career-apparel color becomes a direct presentation of corporate culture and values. Dark blue and gray strengthen the professionalism and rationality of the financial industry; white and light blue have become symbols of trust and professionalism in medical industry; creative industries highlight openness and innovation through bright and diversified colors. This shows that career-apparel color is an important brand language. Through unified and differentiated strategies, enterprises can form unique recognition and cultural imprint in external communication. Meanwhile, career-apparel color is not only an external business card but also an internal cohesion of employee identity, promoting teamwork and organizational belonging.

However, color psychological effects are not universal laws. In cross-cultural contexts, different cultures may have opposite interpretations of the same color. For example, white symbolizes purity and scientific spirit in Western culture but is associated with funerals in some Eastern cultures; red represents festivity and auspiciousness in China but may imply danger or warning in some Western contexts. These differences suggest that multinational enterprises must carefully consider cultural contexts in career-apparel design to avoid weakening organizational image due to color misreading. Meanwhile, different industry demands for color also require designers to balance psychological laws and industry characteristics, satisfying both psychological regulation functions and professional attributes.

In addition, with social development and increasing individualized needs, career-apparel color design is gradually showing diversification and innovation trends. On the one hand, enterprises convey professionalism and stability through color design; on the other hand, employees also hope to show personality through color and alleviate the monotony and suppression of traditional career apparel. This tension pushes career-apparel color to seek new balance between tradition and innovation. In the future, digital tools and big-data analytics may provide more scientific decision-making basis for career-apparel color design, enabling it to balance mental health, cultural differences, and organizational values.

In summary, career-apparel color is not only a design issue but also a comprehensive topic involving psychology, sociology, and cultural studies. It is an interdisciplinary research object, affecting both individual emotions and behaviors and determining organizational image and social cognition. Under the background of diversification and globalization, how to scientifically and reasonably utilize color psychology to design career apparel has become an important issue for promoting enterprise development and cultural communication.

## 7. CONCLUSION

From the perspective of color psychology, this study systematically explores the impacts of career-apparel color on employee psychological states, organizational image, and cross-cultural and industry adaptation. Results show that color can not only regulate employees' emotions and

workplace atmosphere but also serve as an important symbol of corporate culture, exerting profound influence on external cognition and brand communication. Cool tones such as blue and green are more suitable for emphasizing professionalism and stability; red and orange are appropriate for posts requiring vitality and motivation but should be used cautiously to avoid negative psychological pressure. Under cross-cultural and industry differences, career-apparel color design must balance cultural contexts and industry characteristics to unify psychological effects and organizational values.

Overall, career-apparel design based on color psychology is not only an aesthetic practice but also a means of psychological regulation and cultural communication. Future research can further combine digital technology and emotion-recognition tools to explore more scientific and personalized color-application paths, promoting innovation and development of career-apparel design in the global context.

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