



The Impact of Islamic Culture on the Use of Color in Arabic Domestic Interiors

Dr. Fawzi A. Al-Zamil*

Introduction

The use of color is one of the major tools (along with rhythm, contrast, harmony and balance) in any interior design project. The research described in this paper was based on the hypothesis that color is strongly influenced by culture and has different meanings across the world. The author argues that in order to understand and use color correctly, one has to understand local culture. However, this can be a problematic subject, especially for interior design projects in the Arabian Gulf states, as the population is exposed to global commercial culture that strongly influences life and guides personal taste, especially in interior design.

To investigate the influence of culture on the use of color in Arabic interiors, the author started by tracing the cultural structure of the Arabian Gulf region. He found that Islam is the main religion in that region and forms one of the deepest foundations of Arabian culture. Based on this fact, the author has used evidence from the Muslim holy book (Quran) in order to illustrate the strong influences of the Islamic tradition in shaping Arabs' impressions of certain colors. In addition, this paper discusses human nature's drive for distinction and uniqueness, and how color has been one of the major tools of distinction throughout the ages, in all aspects of life, including interior design.

The paper describes in comprehensive terms the scope of this research, focusing on the use of color in interior design in the Arabian Gulf states. Thus, the paper explains the geographical, cultural and functional factors that shaped how Arabs used color in their interiors.

* Assistant Professor, Interior Design Department, College of Basic Education, Public Authority of Applied Education and Training, Kuwait.

In doing this, the author provides examples of the use of color in interior design projects throughout the world, and focusing on the Arabian region.

Finally, the paper refers to the role of modernization and consumption patterns in shaping contemporary interior design projects in Arabian Gulf states. Then, the author concludes with an outline of findings and guidelines that must guide the application of color in domestic interior design projects in the Arabian Gulf states.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research is to illustrate the significance of local environment and culture on the selection and use of color palette in domestic modern Arabian Gulf interior projects.

RESEARCH PROBLEM (QUESTION)

Today and through first-hand experience in the field of interior design, it is evident that the application of color in interior spaces, in both public and private projects, is done in a haphazard manner. The decisions are taken very lightly, often by non-specialist individuals or groups, and neglect various technical and cultural criteria. However, for the sake of this research, the author sought to focus on the interior spaces of the house, as the house is an individual space that best reflects the personal taste and choices of its users.

The problem that the author observed is demonstrated by the chaos and meaningless way color is applied in domestic spaces in the modern Arabian Gulf region. Color is usually selected based on personal taste or in direct mimicking of international trends and fashions. These in effect degrade the value of the projects and sever the modern house of all ties to historical, contextual and cultural heritage.

The selection of color for any interior has to be done with profound understanding of the type of project in terms of whether it is a commercial, healthcare, or residential project, as well as the taste, style and cultural background of the client. Also important is the client's perception of and feeling toward the chosen color, as color has a psychological effect on the end user of the space and anyone who

might use it. The colors of the rooms within the home need to bring out the personality of its occupants and soothe their feelings. While most of us may not spend a lot of time thinking about room color, it affects every day of our lives. Room color can influence our mood and our thoughts. Colors affects people in many ways, depending upon age, gender, ethnic background and local climate. Certain colors or groups of colors tend to elicit a similar reaction from most people - the overall difference being in the shade or tones used.

Today and through first-hand experience in the field of interior design, it is evident that the application of color in interior spaces, in both public and private projects, is done in a haphazard manner. The decisions are taken very lightly, often by non-specialist individuals or groups, and neglect various technical and cultural criteria. However, for the sake of this research, the author sought to focus on the interior spaces of the house, as the house is an individual space that best reflects the personal taste and choices of its users.

The problem that the author observed is demonstrated by the chaos and meaningless way color is applied in domestic spaces in the modern Arabian Gulf region. Color is usually selected based on personal taste or in direct mimicking of international trends and fashions. These in effect degrade the value of the projects and sever the modern house of all ties to historical, contextual and cultural heritage.

In the author's experience as a professional interior designer, people tend to be scared and confused regarding the choice of color for the spaces within their homes due to not having experience or not liking a color for emotional reasons. The author has also noticed the misuse of color as a result of trends that come from other cultures that conflict with Arabian culture and beliefs. People follow the latest fashions, only to feel discomfort and annoyance when they move into their space and reality hits. For instance, although black is considered a color of grief, horror and shame in Arabic culture, clients sometimes choose it for the wall covering of their bedroom or living room because they have seen it in a movie or in a foreign magazine. In reality, the

theme of the movie required that specific color and decor to empower the 1-2 minutes seen, but not to live with it.



Figure (1) - Black Bedroom (<http://infoteli.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Black-and-White-bedroom-interior-design-by-Marcelo-Joulia.jpg>)



Figure (2) - Black Bathroom (<http://cdn.home-designing.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Italian-style-black-bathroom.jpeg>)

The author argues that the Arabian Gulf region has a wealth of culture and heritage that could be valuable sources for the selection of color in interior spaces. The application of color based on full awareness of historical and cultural examples can produce more successful interior design projects. AlMorham states that the traditional houses of Makah in Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf countries share the same color palette. (AlMorham, 1996) Most of these colors are confined between white and brown see the brown beige color palette in Figure 5 (white is the color of the calcareous stone or lime used to make the brick and plaster of the house and brown is the color of the wood used for furniture, windows, doors and ceilings). The natural brown of the wood was mostly used for ceilings, harmoniously, giving warmth to the interior, and its dark color minimized the perception of the room's height (almost 3meters). In contrast, the white gives a sense of spaciousness and openness to the interiors. The blend of these two colors thus provided contrast, another dimension of interior design principles.



Figure (3) - Beit Al Khalid - Kuwait City (<http://www.traveladventure-s.org/countries/kuwait/images/beit-khalid03.jpg>)



Figure (4) - Beit Al Khalid - Kuwait City (Figure 3 Beit Al Khalid - Kuwait City (<http://www.traveladventure-s.org/countries/kuwait/images/beit-khalid03.jpg>))

Willow Green 2150-10	Mustard Olive 2151-10	Medieval Gold 2152-10	Golden Bark 2153-10	Yellow Oxide 2154-10
Lichen Green 2150-20	Golden Chalice 2151-20	Aztec Yellow 2152-20	Corduroy 2153-20	Spicy Mustard 2154-20
Savannah Green 2150-30	Ochre 2151-30	Autumn Gold 2152-30	Tapestry Gold 2153-30	Buttercup 2154-30
Spring Dust 2150-40	Sulfur Yellow 2151-40	Golden Tan 2152-40	Cork 2153-40	York Harbor Yellow 215
Hampton Green 2150-50	Bronzed Beige 2151-50	Golden Straw 2152-50	Desert Tan 2153-50	Straw 2154-50
Pale Celery 2150-60	Linen Sand 2151-60	Mannequin Cream 2152-6	Rich Cream 2153-60	Filtered Sunlight 2154
Easter Lily 2150-70	Powder Sand 2151-70	Mayonnaise 2152-70	Ivory Tusk 2153-70	Vanilla Ice Cream 2154

Figure (5) - Beige Color Palette (http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-QcjhsB0k7aM/T73asB_P5vl/AAAAAAAAAZt4/WHCIA7uhlfs1600/Benjamin-Moore-Color-31.gif)

Is there evidence of the impact of Islamic teachings on the selection of specific color palettes in Arabs' daily lives?

The majority of Arabs were raised with Islam as their religion. Therefore, Islamic rules and regulations became the Muslim culture and set the norms of their social lives and their cultural characteristics. Muslims consider the Quran as their constitution for every aspect of the way they live as well as how they design their houses.

The Islamic religion has two major sources: the Holy Book (Quran) and the Sunnah of the Prophet Mohamad (PBUH, Peace be upon Him). As is generally known by Muslims, the definition of Quran is “The word of God that was revealed to Mohammad (PBUH) in clear Arabic tongue” (Zafzaf, 1984, p. 5). The Sunnah is the second source of Islamic religion. It has been defined by Islamic scholars as “Anything narrated from or about the Prophet (PBUH) either before or after he became a prophet, of his statements, actions, confirmations, biography, and his physical character and attributes” (AboZaho, 1984, p. 10).

Islam forms a source of ideology and influences Muslims’ personal and urban behavior. As such, it is important to search for references in the Quran and Sunnah and investigate whether they affect the preference for specific colors in Arabic domestic interiors.

God says: (And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colors. Verily, in that are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge) (SuratAr- Rum, verse 22). This verse confirms that there is a miracle in color differences and God has ordered Muslims to look attentively at this verse and glorify God to increase their faith.

See you not that Allah sends down water (rain) from the sky, and we produce therewith fruits of various colors, and among the mountains are streaks white and red, of varying colors and (others) very black.* And likewise of men and cattle, are of various colors. It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Mighty, Oft-Forgiving. (Sûrat Fâtir, verses 27-28)

In the Islamic faith, color is both symbolic and aesthetic. It is associated with two fundamental sources: first, the light that comes from the heavens that is associated with the Creator God (Allah) or the light of faith that illuminates the darkness of one’s spirit. On the other hand, there is a semantic overlap between the words “darkness” and “injustice.” Thus, Arabian people consider every deviation to be evil, because it turns away from the beauty that is associated with the will of God Almighty. Thus the darkness of black has become a color of

sadness and grief, and colors of brightness are associated with beauty and joy in Arabian's people's norms(Thuwaini, 2013).

The use of color as a sign of the human need for uniqueness and self-actualization as reflected in domestic interior design

The psychologist Abraham Maslow defined “self-actualization” as the need to be good, to be fully alive and to find meaning in life. Maslow touched upon a vital human characteristic - the need to be most like what “you see yourself as”. We all face real-life personal and professional pressures and constraints of space and finances, for example, which often restrict those opportunities. Interior designers must create spaces that bring out the best of us psychologically, biologically and energy-wise. Colors play a vital role in this process as studies show that human feelings are indirectly affected by colors. Alsheeli stated that color has a huge influence on human beings because its attractant waves affect the human nervous system and add joy to the human spirit. Color is mirth for the eyes as music is mirth for the ears. Color not only affects those who can see it, but blind people as well(Alsheeli, 2007, p. 62). People employ colors and designs in houses, interior spaces, cars, clothes and other personal items to emphasize ownership and distinguish their property from others.

The scope of the research

The profession of interior design

The concept that comes to mind when any one mentions interior designer is that of a professional who begins his/her work where others have ended, whose job is to cover others' mistakes. This misconception prevails among most regular people as well as professionals in the construction industry, which does not serve the development of the building industry (Interior Design Department, Mohammad Ben Fahad University, p. 3).

Interior designers aim to create functional, successful and aesthetically pleasing interior spaces. The designer's role includes the application of sustainable design methods to select materials and furniture. Among the important tasks of the interior designer is to

select an appropriate color scheme for the project, whether it is residential, commercial or healthcare. Selection is usually based on full understanding of color theory and historical trends as well as a good understanding of the client's needs, expectations and cultural background. The selection of color depends on many factors, such as the availability of natural light, flooring type, materials used, users' personal aspects in terms of health and taste and other functional factors. The aim of the interior designer must be to achieve high levels of comfort, function and aesthetics to lift users' spirit and mood through the achievement of visual balance and harmony.

The definition of color in the view of interior design

Color is very subjective. How someone "sees" a color is not easily measured and individuals may differ in how they perceive colors. While there are commonalities in the meanings of colors around the world, they may also differ greatly between cultures. (Wood, 2014); within our cultural group, however, the emotional response to different colors is surprisingly similar.

Colors are the primary communicators of interior design. They convey aspects of personality and have a psychological impact on the emotions of the humans in the space. It has been shown that color resonates with people in different ways (Cousins, 2014, p. 1). Every color on the color wheel triggers a certain human emotion. While red (a stimulant of appetite) is a classic dining room choice, green (which soothes senses) is perfect for a relaxing washroom scheme. "The color green elicited mainly positive emotional responses, including the feelings of relaxation, calmness, and happiness as well as comfort, peace, and hope" (Kaya & Epps, 2004, p. 400). A single color might be monotonous or overwhelming, so good interior design means using an appropriate color scheme where each color complements the other on the color wheel. This brings coherence to every element of the room, without being overpowering or drawing the eye to any particular corner.

Colors must also work with the ambient lighting of a space.

Natural light works brilliantly on warm colors like orange, red, and yellow, while soft light or mood lighting works better with earthy hues of sienna, brown and crimson. In addition, even the climate we live in influences our color preference (De Bartoli & Maroto, 2001, p. 4).

Finally, the use of color in interior design is about mirroring the personality traits and preferences of the primary inhabitants. Men often like the austere minimalism of wood or achromatic and bright colors, while women typically indulge in lively warm shades or pastels. In addition, a good choice of color helps balance out lighting, make an area look bigger or harness neurological perceptions of a space (De Bartoli & Maroto, 2001, p. 5).

The definition of culture

An elusive concept of interior design is conveying the “way of life” in a space in terms of design elements and accessories. Capturing the essence of a space or aligning it to its context and the diverse backgrounds it may come to represent or inherit is the “cultural” aspect of interior design. Culture is defined as “learned and shared human patterns or models for living; day-to-day living patterns. These patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Culture is mankind’s primary adaptive mechanism” (Damen, 1987, p. 367).

In interior design terms, culture comes to reflect either a personal style of design or is inspired by different regional styles, like the Buddhist themes of Far East, the medieval European styles, the modernist minimalism of Europe, or the rustic, natural elements of southern Africa, etc. Artworks, handicraft elements or lifestyle factors pertaining to the users’ ancestry and roots, religion, artistic inclination or general beliefs can lift the mood. Culture may also pertain to motifs of essentialism - that is, designing a space according to the behavioral patterns of its inhabitants. For example, lovers of history may incorporate elements of historical significance - books, portraits, artifacts - into the designed space to demonstrate their personalities and interests.

Interior designers should be aware of the cultural significance of

specific symbols and/or colors, in order to communicate well with clients and create successful spaces. “Interior designers should be aware of the color meaning that is appropriate to different cultures and be able to apply the color meaning in interiors so that it can satisfy diverse users, especially in stressful healthcare environments” (Kwon, 2014, p. 1).

The role of Islam (Quran) in shaping Arabic culture

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the question of Arabic identity began to be asked closely. It has been proven that the Middle Eastern region, including the Arabian Gulf region, cannot be disconnected from either its Arabic culture or Islamic civilization. According to Sobhi Ghandoor, a unique character of Arabic nationalism is its strong relation between Arabism and Islamism. Arabic is the language of the Quran, thus the Arabic culture spread along with Islamic teachings. In addition, the Arabian region contains all the holy sites of Islam. Ghandoor confirms that the Arabic individual is one who belongs to the Arabic culture. Arabic culture is not related only to race, religion, political position or ideological view, rather it expresses belonging to a nation that distinguishes itself from other nations within the circle of the Islamic world. He continues that, after the rise of Islam, “Arabic civilization” took the Arabic culture from the limited circles of race and geography to a wider civilized horizon (Ghandoor, 2014).

The impact of limited environmental resources and the call of simplicity and humbleness in Islam religious teachings on the use of color in traditional domestic interiors

The call for simplicity is common among many religions; it can be called a human trait. It represents human desire for purity and spiritual elevation. Islam and Muslims are similar, and there is much evidence of the call to simplicity, humbleness and asceticism.

Allah (God) said: “O You who believe! Indeed the promise of Allah is true, so do not become deceived by the life of the world, do not let delusion deceive you from Allah” (Al Rum: 10) and “Wealth and

children are the delight of the life of this world, and the ever remaining righteous acts are better with your Lord in reward and a better hope” (Al-Kahf: 46). The Hadiths of the Prophet Mohamad (PBUH) also call on many occasions for the avoidance of some forms of indulgence: “A man came to the Messenger of Allah and inquired: ‘O Messenger of Allah! Guide me to a deed that, if I do it, Allah will love me and the people will love me as well.’ He (saw) said, ‘Have renunciation in the world: Allah will love you; have renunciation from what is in the hands of the people: they will love you’” (Ibn Majah).

Islam does not prevent Muslims from enjoying life and owning high-quality material goods. “Renunciation of the world is not by making unlawful that which is lawful or wasting wealth. Renunciation is when that which is in Allah’s possession is more reliable to you than that which is in your hand, and that the reward for an affliction that strikes you is more desirable to you if it (the affliction) were to remain” (Tirmidhi). Yet we cannot neglect the fact that the call for simplicity in Islam has contributed to the design of Muslim mosques and home interiors.

On the other hand, the environment has its impact on Arabian people, as the Gulf’s geographic location limits the materials available due to its harsh desert topography. This factor has made the beige and light brown natural color of the traditional houses as they are built from the mud and the desert stones. The simplicity of the traditional courtyard house was evident in both its construction and its design and materials and color. The house would have at least one courtyard; the richer the family, the more courtyards. From outside, all the houses look the same, side by side, dull and plain natural color, with no or very few windows onto the street or alley (Al-Jassar, 2009, p. 156).

Contextual and functional factors that influenced the use of color in traditional domestic interiors

In order to distill the historical lesson in the use of color in the Arabian peninsula, the author sought to look at the contextual and functional factors that influence the use of colors in traditional domestic interiors. The mud house is the most common dwelling type

found in the cities and towns of the Arabian Peninsula. The house is primitive and simple, built with coral stone, and the walls are covered with mud applied by masons. The interior colors are light shades of beige and white. In some cases, a geometrical pattern is applied to add a touch of interest to the interior of rooms. Some traces of imperfection are found, which adds to the charm and the tactile quality of the interiors. (Yarwood, 1999, p. 66) Most of the materials are found in the surrounding environment. As such, the color palette used in traditional buildings is quite limited, being a mix of shades of whites, stone, brown mud brick, and beige sand colors.



Figure (6) - Old Kuwait Neighbourhood (<<http://www.crsk.edu.kw/>>)

In addition to the simple mud houses found all over the Arabian peninsula, there are the tents that are used by the Bedouin Arab tribes. The Arabian tribes are a vital source of culture and heritage. “The Bedouin of the Arabian desert uses a black tent known as the *beit al-sha’r*, or ‘house of hair.’ These tents are woven from the hair of domesticated sheep and goats, and their design is thought to have originated in Mesopotamia. The animal hair is woven into strips of coarse cloth known as *fala’if*, which are then sewn together. The natural colour of the animal is retained -mainly black goat’s hair, with occasional addition of sheep’s wool, which gives the tent a streaked, brown/black appearance” (Saudi Arabian Culture, 2010).



Figure (7) - Arabian black tent (<https://delhi4cats.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/tent1.jpg>)



Figure (8) - Arabian black tent (<http://www.saudiembassy.net/files/PDF/Publications/Magazine/1998-Winter/images/p16.jpg>)

In addition, Arabian Bedouins are known for making unique fabrics woven from goat or sheep wool. “Sheep’s wool in white, black and a few colors are available in medium to thick gauge. Powdered commercial dyes, primarily from India, can be bought in red, orange, yellow, blue and green, and occasionally other colors. Previously one could buy goat hair in a variety of colors and thickness, and sheep’s wool of finer spin and more subtle colors, but they are not often seen now” (Hilden, 1993, p. 4).



Figure (9) - Sadu fabric (<http://www.ilsul6ana.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/20111123-101033.jpg>)



Figure (10) -Sadupillows (http://p.b5z.net/i/u/6079793/i/doowah__-with_sadu_setting_ezr.jpg)

The geography of the Arabian peninsula

The Arabian peninsula is located in the south-western corner of Asia. The Arabian peninsula is considered a tropical desert. With intense summer heat that reaches temperatures as high as 54°C, its central regions are dry and its coastal region experiences high humidity. Rainfall is quite rare, with an average of less than 100 mm a year (Ochsenwald, 2014).

In earlier times, the majority of Arabs lived in the desert and adapted to it harmoniously, despite its harshness and inhospitableness. Accordingly, when, before 1500bc, the Quran began to be revealed in the desert area, and specifically in Makah in Saudi Arabia, it asked people to believe in Islam and claimed the recompense that believers will get in Paradise hereafter. The Quran communicates with desert people in language that grasps their attention and feelings, and in turn they interact with it sympathetically. It describes Paradise in terms of extravagant colorful features and soothing elements like fresh water and green trees with diverse kinds of fruit and rivers of white milk, honey and wine. “Like paradise promised by the dutiful where the rivers of water is putrid and rivers of milk did not change the taste and rivers of wine delicious to the drinkers, and rivers of honey refinery and they have all the fruits” (Quran, Surah-Muhammad Verse 15). In describing Paradise in terms of elements that were absent from their desert home, Allah used vocabulary that desert people would fully understand to motivate them to follow His teachings.

Likewise, the Quran promises believers that they will wear green silk gowns and live in gold and silver houses filled with luxurious green silk upholstery to emphasize the ease of life and the opulence and lavish lifestyle that contrasts with their life in the desert. Various explanations have been proposed for this lavish use of color throughout much of Islamic art. Some scholars trace it to the drab and dusty landscape that pervades the heartland of Islam. (The word khaki, for example, derives from the Persian word meaning dusty or dust-colored.) However, as people from other desert or steppe regions do not necessarily value color as highly as Muslims do, other scholars see the use of color as

evoking Paradise, described in the Quran as a rich and verdant place where Muslims recline on silken pillows. Muslims, particularly mystics, often elaborated the symbolic values of color, but these values were often contradictory and meaningful only in specific geographical or chronological contexts (Blair, 2012 P.5).

“These! For them will be 'Adn (Eden) Paradise (everlasting Gardens); wherein rivers flow underneath them, therein they will be adorned with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine and thick silk. They will recline therein on raised thrones. How good is the reward, and what an excellent Murtafaqa (dwelling, resting place, etc.)!” (Quran, Surah Al-Kahf (The Cave,verse 31).

Thus, the Quran's colors and elements of lifestyle in Paradise eventually became the color design palette of Muslims and their interior design principles. The majority of Muslims strive to live in a way like Allah's Paradise and the image of Paradise and its colors are perceived as the ultimate embodiment of lifestyle and cultural factors, to such an extent that they describe a well-designed space as a “piece of Paradise.”

Arabic language celebration of colors

Color in Arabic language and culture has profound manifestations and indications. The Arabic language contains dozens of names that reflect the same color and its gradation, as well as the function of the color depending on what is being described. For instance, the color black on an animal is named differently from the black color of the night's darkness and the black color of humankind. (Al-Mashhadany, 2011, p. 225) It goes in harmony with their desert environment, regardless of the region's differences, and it also fulfills its changeable needs during its long history, as color used to be represented in the Quran as an invitation from Allah (God) for people to contemplate His Almighty creation in nature. For instance: “Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colors? And in the mountains are tracts, white and red of varying shades and (some) extremely black” (Quran, Sura Fater, verse 27). On the other hand, color was a critical aspect in their traditional poems, despite the

desert's lack of color. Arabic poetry was rich and comprehensive in using color to describe spaces, feelings, objects, etc. Poet Saad Aldin described his Arabian heritage nobility by saying: Our actuality are white / Black is our battles / Our terrain is green / Red is our sword.

We find the symbolic impact of colors mentioned in Arabic literature through Saad Aldin Alhily, and it is said that most of the current Arab flags were inspired by these colors (Thuwaini, 2013). Shaker puts in this way: "The richness in nature was and still is a great inspirational source for poets, as it has many terminologies and adjectives that poets could interact with and use to add more vibrant vivid contents to draw a picture of their feelings. One of these vocabularies is color. Even though the desert nature and limited livable features that surrounded them, it profoundly influenced the Arabian poets. Thus, poets could remodel the color of nature to describe and express their feelings to add more interest and draw another aesthetic perspective" (Al-Mashhadany, 2011, p. 221)

Colors in the Quran

It is important to note many religions and cultures have given special meanings to various colors. For instance, yellow has sacred connotations in European Christianity and in different Chinese and Indian religions. The Egyptians also raised the value of the color yellow due to their worship of the sun. In a similar manner, Muslims prefer to wear white clothes during pilgrimage in direct relation to the way the Quran describes whiteness as a sign of success in the hereafter. (And for those whose faces will become white, they will be in Allah's Mercy (Paradise), therein they shall dwell forever)" (SûratÂl-'Imrân, verses 106-107).

The Quranic verses contain many references to colors. It gives believers the color green when describing their clothing in paradise. (Upon the inhabitants will be green garments of fine silk and brocade. And they will be adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord will give them a purifying drink.) (SûratÂl-'Insân, verse 21). On the other hand, like many other religions, it describes the color of Hell fire as red (And when the heaven is split open and becomes rose-colored like oil) (SûratÂl-'Rahman, verse 37).

As such, “Colors expressed the belief of Muslims in the meaning of such colors through symbolic knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah. Also, it expressed signs of prosperity and happiness during certain historical phases of the Islamic State”(Ameen, 2011, p. 87). Ameen also confirms that “colors in the Quran and Hadiths mentioned in various connotations; however, they took symbolic meanings such as connecting some religious practices with certain colors” (ibid, p. 87)

The use of colors in the Quran in positive contexts

(It is a yellow cow, bright in its color, pleasing to the beholders) (Sûrat Al-Baqarah, verse 69). This verse from the Holy Quran describes the cow that God asked the sons of Israel to sacrifice for His sake. The interpreters thoroughly described the yellow color as being so bright and reflecting the color of the sun to the degree that it might seem to some viewers as dark. Nevertheless, this verse confirms the ability of certain colors to bring joy to views (Ibn-Katheer, 2003).

(On the Day [Day of Resurrection] when some faces will become white and some faces will become black; as for those whose faces will become black (to them will be said): “Did you reject Faith after accepting it? Then taste the torment (in Hell) for rejecting Faith.” And for those whose faces will become white, they will be in Allah’s Mercy (Paradise), therein they shall dwell forever) (SûratÂl-’Imrân, verses 106-107). In this verse, the Quran uses the colors white and black to describe the faces of believers and disbelievers on the Day of Judgment. This illustration is repeated in different verses in the Quran (Ibn-Katheer, 2003).

In another verse of the Quran (and they will wear green garments of fine and thick silk) (Sûrat Al-Kahf, verse 31), Allah describes the clothes of the believers in paradise. Ibn-Katheer explains that it meant very thin and transparent green shirts (ibid.).

In another incidence of the use of the color green in the Quran (Reclining on green cushions and rich beautiful mattresses.) (Sûrat Ar-Rahmân, verse 76), Ibn-Katheer cites various scholars who indicate that in this verse God describes believers as leaning on green hanging beds in paradise in the hereafter(ibid.).

The use of colors in the Quran in negative contexts

As stated above, the color black is mentioned in the Quran on several occasions to describe the faces of the disbelievers on the Day of Judgment.

In the following verse: (And when the news of (the birth of) a female (child) is brought to any of them, his face becomes blackish, and he is filled with inward grief!) (Sûrat An-Nahl, verse 58), the Quran illustrates the depression that is seen on the face of the Arab father when receiving the news of getting a female daughter (Ibn-Katheer, 2003).

(And on the Day of Resurrection you will see those who lied against Allah (i.e. attributed to Him sons, partners) - their faces will be black) (Sûrat Az-Zumar, verse 60). In this verse again the color black is used in a negative sense to describe the disappointment of the disbelievers.

In a similar sequence, the verse 102 from Surat Taha (On the day when the trumpet shall be blown, and We will gather the guilty, blue-eyed, on that day), illustrates how these yes of the criminals shall be blue from their fear the experience in the Day of Judgment (Ibn-Katheer, 2003).

The historical employment of color in interior spaces in the West and East

The prevailing use of color in interior design follows distinctly different paths in the West and the East. In the West, there has been a “chromo phobia” since ancient times, leading to marginalized, degraded and ignored use of colors. Even the brilliant sculptures of Greco-Roman gods have found their popular association in our minds as their top coat has chipped away to reveal their all-white interior. While medieval paintings used some colors, as did churches and houses on some walls, murals or windows - the overriding theme was to be minimal and use earthy hues, whites, blacks and greys. The use of color was considered irrational, unclean, over-the-top or plain tacky. Victorian-style interiors prefer the use of solid muted colors rather than flowered wallpaper (see Figure 11). Even as the Art Deco and impressionist movements took hold in the Americas, the European fundamentalist steered clear with their “love of white generalization” (see Figure 12).



Figure (11) - Victorian-style bedroom (<http://styles-and-periods.interiordezi-ne.com/decorating-styles/>)



Figure (12) - Art Deco interior (<http://www.art-deco-style.com/art-deco-interior-design.html>)

By contrast, the Eastern world has always been generous, even extravagant, with colors. From the oriental temples of worship in Japan, China and South-East Asia to the households in Pakistan and

India, there has always been a culture of using colorful rugs, curtains, pillows and drapes to lend character (see Figure 13). Threaded patterns, handicrafts and frescos have also been part of life, even outside of urban decor. Several villages and towns use distinctive paintings on their walls, ancient caves have been found with pigmented paintings in green, red, gold, silver, crimson and yellow. Textiles play a major part. The Silk Route - which weaved its way from China to Afghanistan, influenced the way different colors would be used on interior spaces and could be easily maintained with semi-permanent artifacts. Clay, wood and other relatively monochromatic substances have been regularly hand-painted or fire-burnt to derive colors for interior spaces as well. Traditional interior design arts like Feng-Shui (China) or Vaastu (India) had several associated gemstones, colors or chromatic lights, which further invested interest in use of color for interior spaces (see Figure 14).



Figure (13) - Interior of Kencho-ji temple. Kamakura (Japan) (www.traveladventures.org <<http://www.traveladventures.org>>)



Figure (14) - Interior of monastery at Bodhgaya, India(www.apogeephoto.-com)

Historical examples of the use of colors in Islamic interiors

Designing an interior space in accordance with Islamic elements has its own charm, and a fair few limitations in keeping with the laws of the religion. The beauty of Islamic interiors is in their use of colors, which effectively convey their most uplifting values. In lands as varied as the Arabic world, Morocco, Spain or India, the influence of Islam is clear in their architectural motifs with an abundance of green (see Figure 15).



Figure (15) - Interior of house in Morocco (<http://www.shutterstock.com/>)

As mentioned above, green symbolizes life, nature, fertility and is the sacred color of Islam, having been worn by the Prophet Mohamad (PBUH) Himself. It is also the binding color of the Holy Quran, conveying unity and a steadfast spirit. In architectural terms, it lends a soothing, relaxing ambience and instantly adds a natural calmness to any design. Even today, the place of worship, bathing or sleeping often incorporates green. Glass windows, tiles and mosaic patterns on floors in several Moroccan arches and medieval Egyptian structures incorporate green in their interior space. (Dilloway, 2006, p. 17)

The color yellow in various hues as different as lemon, ochre, chrome or gold has influenced Islamic interiors for centuries. Their natural brightness, especially in windows or floors, helps lighter yellow hues add a lively dash of energy to any design. The richer shades like ochre or gold convey aristocracy and royalty, and were generously used in high-end interiors.

The color white is used in the majesty of minarets, mosques and tombs (think TajMahal). White stands for purity, freedom and peace, and features prominently in several Islamic interiors. It also contrasts well with other colors and makes them pop. Sacred text and verses from the Holy Quran (aayat) have often been inscribed in black or gold against white in mosques across ancient Islamic world. (Abu-Bakar, 2015, p. 4)

The color red and red-ochre started out as a convenient, easily available shade in many earthy pigments but soon found favor in Islamic interior design. From Grenada structures of Spain to interiors of mosques in Iran, the bright warmth of red indicates cheer, love and passion. Since Islamic interiors cannot represent their supreme god, the Allah, in any shape or form, the essential shapes, contours and dynamism have also held the color red in great delight, capable of drawing the eye amid a busy pattern.

The undeniable vibrancy of blue has often been celebrated in the traditional geometric and patterned interiors of Islamic spaces. From the Blue Mosque (Istanbul) to the colorful tiles and arches (Afghanistan) or the gold calligraphy on a dark blue background (Morocco) or even the hand-made rugs of India - several Islamic interiors use blue as the lively counterpart to yellow and gold. "In other buildings like dwelling spaces, color not only had the ornamental functionality, also other elements were used instead of color to make the space colorful. Utilizing broken mirrors in space reflects the color of the environment into the interior area. Light with different qualities affected on the psychological and social place of human in life"(Arjmandi, Tahir, Shabankareh, Shabani, & Mazaheri, 2011, p. 299).

The impact of modernization and Westernization on the use of colors in contemporary interiors in the Arabic countries

After the discovery and exportation of oil in the 1960s and 70s, the Arabian Gulf countries went through a period of rapid modernization. This period brought with it not only an increase in population and urban sprawl, but also overall developments in the area of education, health and housing. Along with development, the Arabian Gulf population began to open up to the global world and experience new ideas and lifestyles. This openness and communication with the world through many forms, influenced all areas of life, including architecture and interior design.

Before oil exportation, dwellings were almost standard. All houses were of a similar form with very little variation. Methods of construction were simple and depended on local craftsmanship techniques passed down from generation to generation. The construction of houses back

then depended on local materials and some very limited and simple materials, usually imported from India. The poor economic condition of the population influenced the interior of the house. Thus interiors were simple in form, poor in materials and lacked ornamentation.

All this changed after the exportation of oil, when the Gulf states brought in huge revenues and began to apply welfare state policies; the populations enjoyed large disposable incomes. This led to a certain amount of conspicuous consumption as people began to express their wealth through the purchase of cars, high-end houses and clothing from international brands.

Among areas of interest to the population of the Gulf states was interior design and furniture, where the general population depended on expat designers who did not understand local customs and context. Or, in most cases, home owners relied on their individual taste to design the interior of their homes, depending largely on mimicking international styles and fashion trends as a result of exposure to the global media. However, depending on home decor magazines or international TV shows is not enough to achieve successful interiors. And as a result, many mistakes began to be made in the application of self-made interior design solutions in all areas, including the use of colors. Dr. Mahgoub stated that “Understanding the impact of the forces of globalization and localization allows us to interact meaningfully instead of wailing and fearing their negative impact on us. We should not isolate ourselves from the human development; rather we should learn how to participate in it. There is no threat to our own existence and culture if we choose it to be so. We should be active participants instead of passive recipients of globalization” (Mahgoub, 2003, p. 517). The author believes that interior design and the selection of color must be based on local knowledge and should distill references from history and local customs.

The role of colors in the encouragement of conspicuous consumption

Retailing is the art of persuasion, and using colors to trigger conspicuous buying behavior is an old trick to manipulate buyers, although color alone does not finalize the decision. For food and clothes, in particular, smell, texture and sound also have great impact.

In today's advanced commercial world, sellers use creative and distinct colors to encourage consumption. One of the strongest techniques is brand association. Major brands have highly recognizable colors and loyal customers tend to stick to those. Some colors like bright yellow/orange and pink are often targeted at the young. Pink in particular has been strongly marketed at young women. Similarly, purple and lilac are used for soothing effects, recognizable as associations for cosmetics, anti-aging products and de-stressing elements. These are also colors regularly used in high-end restaurants to incite hunger and appetite.

Red is used by retailers to convey elements of love, passion or romance. As it also comes with a warning/danger association, it needs to be well marketed with floral or heart themes. Similarly, for bidding, auctions, etc., red branding incites aggressive purchasing. Blue is conventionally seen as the color of security and reliability, so it predominates in banks, health associations, major software entities and social media. Black and gold have been projected regularly as the colors of wealth, prosperity and luxury. Classic retail consumption of luxury products, high-end electronics, high-fashion outfits are all inclined to go "black," accessorizing with a touch of gold or silver to increase their effect. Teal and navy blue are targeted at budget buyers who tend to consume with deliberation, while recent retail trends projecting eco-friendly or environmental consciousness use green. Traditionally a color of wealth, it has found renewed meaning in "fresh," cool and natural products, including edibles. Pastel and colder colors often work in predominantly colder climates, as they provide a comforting, natural association for people there. They also reflect a more refined, mature clientele - creating a visible distance from the warm hues targeted at young buyers.

All in all, today's consumers are bombarded with new colors and trendy fashions. Like no other time in history, they are confronted with various printed, broadcast and online media campaigns, all trying to present new products with rapidly changing designs, colors and shapes. The same goes for interior design, where consumers view new design trends on TV and in magazines and exhibitions. As a result, consumers

finds themselves under constant pressure to follow fashion and seek to change the look of their houses in order to keep up with social pressures and demands.

Conclusion

This research confirms the importance of color as one of the major tools of interior designers. However, the subject is problematic, especially for interior design projects in the Arabian Gulf states, as the population is exposed to global commercial culture that strongly influences life and guides personal taste, especially in interior design.

There are many examples that illustrate successful application of colors in Interior Spaces. The Author tried to show the following examples to clarify such. For example as shown in Figure 16 where the designers designed this room with references from the sea front where the house is located. Also as shown in Figure 17, where the designer created a color palate for the design of the room from the desert surroundings the house. In addition, in Figure 18 the designer borrowed certain colors from the local environment and distinctive creatures in the design of the kitchenette.



Figure (16) - Inspiration from local environment in Interior Design (<<http://zsazsabellagio.blogspot.com/2012/02/bluish-green-beauty.html?m=1>>)

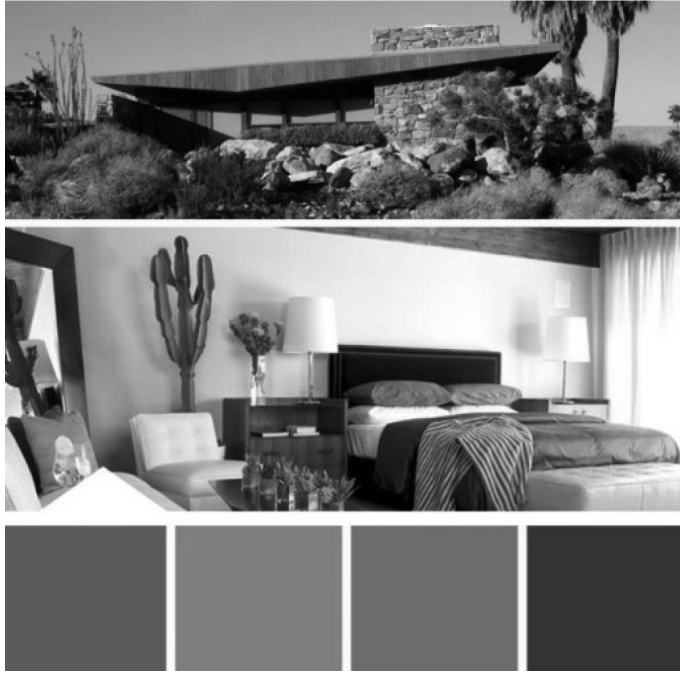


Figure (17) - Inspiration from nature for Bedroom colors (<<http://blog.hgtv.com/design/2014/02/18/modern-bedroom-color-palette-blue-green/>>)



Figure (18) - Inspiration from nature for the design of interior kitchenette (<<http://wendypatrick.com/category/beach-living/>>)

The author has shown that Islam is one of the major sources of Arabian culture. Based on this, the author used evidence from the Holy Quran in order to illustrate the strong influences of the Islamic tradition in shaping Arabs' impressions of certain colors. This research confirms that the meaning of certain colors is derived from culture, and thus varies across the world. The author believes that in order to understand and use color correctly one has to understand local culture.

Despite strong references to the meaning of certain colors in culture and religious sources in the Arabic world, colors have today taken on a different meaning. Due to the forces of globalization and extensive exposure to international cultures and commercial trends, it is no longer possible to limit the application of a wide spectrum colors in contemporary domestic Arabic interiors.

While the colors white and green commonly have positive connotations in Arabic and Islamic culture, many successful and landmark interiors have used colors ranging from blue to yellow, red and orange. The author believes that the success behind these landmark interiors is due to the professionalism of the designer, his/her local knowledge and ability to distill inspiration from the local environment and local culture

Bibliography

- AboZaho, M. (1984). *The Regard of the Islamic Nation for the Prophet Sunnah*. Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: General Department for Scientific Research, Missionary and Fatwa.
- Al-Jassar, M. (2009). *Constancy and Change in Contemporary Kuwait City: The Socio-cultural Dimensions of the Kuwait Courtyard and Diwaniyya*. University of Milwaukee.
- Almarazaqah, N. (2010). *Color and Its Identification in the Holy Quran*. Mo'utah University.
- Alsheeli, S. (2007). Color and Its Indications in Quran. *Journal name needed?*, 4(3), 62.
- Ameen, A. A. (2011). The Explanation of Colors in the Holy Quran and the Prophet Hadiths. *Al-Academy*, pp. 75-.
- Arjmandi, H., Tahir, M., Shabankareh, H., Shabani, M., & Mazaheri, F. (2011). Psychological and Spiritual Effects of Light and Color from Iranian Traditional Houses on Dwellers. *Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 6(2), 288-301.
- Blair, S. (2012, March 8). *Islamic Art*. Retrieved from Islamic Arts & Architecture: <http://islamic-arts.org/2012/islamic-art/>
- Cousins, C. (2014). *The Science Behind Color and Emotion*. Retrieved from Design Shack: <http://designshack.net/articles/inspiration/the-science-behind-color-and-emotion/>
- Damen, L. (1987). *Culture Learning: The Fifth Dimension in the Language Classroom*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- De Bartoli, M., & Maroto, J. (2001). Colors across Cultures: Translating Colors in Interactive Marketing Communications. *Proceedings of the European Languages and the Implementation of Communication and Information*. Renfrewshire, UK: University of Paisley.
- Ghandoor, S. (2014). *Is the Islamic Identity an Alternative to the Arabic Identity?* London, UK: Rai Al youm.
- Hilden, J. M. (1993). Beduin Textiles of Saudi Arabia. *Oriental Carpet and Textile Studies, IV*.

- Ibn-Katheer, H. (2003). *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (2nd ed.). Dar-us-Salam.
- Interior Design Department, Mohammad Ben Fahad University. (n.d.). title needed.
- Kaya, N., & Epps, H. H. (2004). Relationship Between Color and Emotion: A Study of College Students. *College Student Journal*, 38(3), 396-405.
- Kwon, J. (2014). *Cultural Meaning of Color*. (U. o. Minisota, Editor) Retrieved from Interior Design: http://dha.design.umn.edu/programs/grad/documents/Poster_JainKwon_000.pdf
- Mahgoub, Y. (2003). Globalization and the Built Environment in Kuwait. *Habitat International*, 28(4), 505-519.
- Ochsenwald, W. L. (2014, November). Arabian Desert = Arabian Peninsula. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*.
- Piotroeski, C. M. (2009). *Becoming an Interior Designer*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Saudi Arabian Culture. (2010, April 25). Tents of the Arabian Desert. Middle East Arab.
- Thuwaini, A. (2013). Color in Islamic Art and Architecture. *Magazine of Art*.
- Zafzaf, M. A. (1984). *Introduction to Quran and Hadith* (1st ed.). Kuwait: AlFalah Bookshop Publishing and Distribution.