



For decades, pink has been associated with femininity, but it wasn't always that way. Image Source: Pexels user Chimene Gaspar

Pink wasn't always cool. For years it spoke to a kind of hyperfemininity, standing in for the word "girl". It was the color of Barbies and bubble gum, nail polish and Mary Kay Cadillacs. It was regarded as a stark dividing line between genders and an excess of girliness, and girliness was not something to be taken seriously.

Of course it wasn't always this way. When pastel-colored children's clothing first emerged in the mid-1800s, pink had no gendered associations at all. By the early 1900s, however, that had changed. "The generally accepted rule is pink for boys, and blue for girls," announced Earnshaw Infant's Department in 1918. "The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl."¹ And so it went until the 1940s, when the associations reversed and pink became visual shorthand for "girl" while blue announced "boy". Despite a temporary return to more gender-neutral apparel in the '60s and '70s', these associations largely remain intact today.

Now that is changing and manufacturers of consumer products and packaging are an important part of both responding to and shaping this cultural transformation. To stay on top of and drive changing color trends, it's imperative to implement strict color quality control protocols throughout the product development and manufacturing processes.



The celebration of millennial pink is an important lesson in how cultural conversations can transform our associations with color. Image Source: Unsplash user Erol Ahmed

The Evolution of Color Trends

Color is known to be one of the most significant drivers of purchasing decisions for virtually all consumer goods, from furniture to food, [clothing](#) to personal hygiene products. Color preferences are not static, instead they constantly change in response to cultural shifts and marketing efforts. Staying relevant and creating desirable products, then, requires understanding and being responsive to color trends.

Perhaps of the most fascinating and surprising color trend to emerge in recent years has been the celebration of pink. Specifically, millennial pink, which Elle Décor describes as “not quite salmon, but not quite rose.”² The shade began to gain momentum in the early 2010s driven by high fashion designers like Céline, Ryan Roche, and Jonathan Saunders, the release of Wes Anderson’s *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, Glossier packaging, and the nebulous world of social media. In the fall of 2015 Pantone announced Rose Quartz, a now-familiar version of millennial pink, as its 2016 Color of the Year, inspired in part by an Agnes Martin exhibit at the Tate Modern. Soon, pink was everywhere.

So what accounts for the rise of millennial pink, this in-between shade, different from the pale pastels of receiving blankets, more muted than Barbie pink? “We’re in a moment of ambivalent girliness,” writes Véronique Hyland in *The Cut*. “We’re embracing our girlier impulses: our vocal fry, the “likes” and “ums” we were told would hold us back, our #girlboss-ness. But we’re not quite there. We still have to hold something back.”³ However, others believe the popular of pink arises not just from a newfound celebration of femininity for women, but larger conversations about gender fluidity and breaking down of gendered barriers. “As gender sheds its once-binary definition in favor of a more complex, inclusive, and comprehensive one, pink is undergoing a similar rebranding, rejecting the increasingly defunct girly-girls only interpretation of femininity,” says Kim Vandervoort of *Salon*. “It seems obvious that this generation’s creative types would, knowing or unknowingly create an aesthetic that ... mirror[s] the softening of rigid gender boundaries. It’s a pink for everyone.”⁴



Spectrophotometers allow you to stay responsive to ever-changing color trends by facilitating color formulation and ensuring consistency. Image Source: Pexels user Lum3n.com

Staying on Top of Color Trends

While millennial pink is having its moment and may have a long-lasting impact on how pink is perceived, color trends inherently change. Already, tastemakers are shaping the development of tomorrow’s hot new colors, requiring everyone from [paint companies](#) to publishers, fashion houses to furniture makers to shift their attention toward new hues. This process is facilitated by [modern spectrophotometric technologies](#).

Spectrophotometers are designed to see color the way the human eye sees it, only better. By distilling color information to objective numerical data, color can be analyzed with the highest degree of accuracy and precision, replacing the subjectivity inherent to human sight. This allows you to create concrete color standards when developing new color formulations, regardless of material.

You can also analyze virtually any type of sample to create standards reproducing historical colors. With your standard in place, the manufacturing process can be continuously monitored to ensure the colors of all products fall within your accepted range of tolerance, giving you the ability to instantly detect unwanted variation. If your products or product lines are comprised of multiple, disparate materials, then the color data provided by your spectrophotometer allows for easy color matching to ensure cohesion.

With color trends quickly changing, having flexible and versatile spectrophotometric instrumentation enables you to continuously stay on top of color trends and make rapid color switchovers. Some spectrophotometers, such as those offered by HunterLab, are also able to [create an extensive archive of color data](#) that can be drawn on to easily re-introduce past colors. Data can be shared across multiple manufacturing sites, allowing for [seamless color communication](#). As a result, you can ensure consistent, accurate coloration regardless of location. Spectrophotometers allow you to create a complete color quality control system that will ensure you meet the exacting and changing preferences of your customers.

HunterLab Innovation

HunterLab has been a pioneer in color measurement technologies for over 60 years. Today, we offer a comprehensive range of [portable, benchtop, and in-line spectrophotometers](#) designed to meet the diverse needs of our customers in a broad range of industries. Our instruments are sought out by companies all over the world to act as the core component of their color quality control protocols owing to their extraordinary accuracy and ease of use. [Contact us](#) to learn more about our renowned spectrophotometers, customizable software packages, and world-class customer service and let us help you select the perfect color measurement tools for your needs.

1. "When Did Girls Start Wearing Pink?", April 7, 2011, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/when-did-girls-start-wearing-pink-1370097/>
2. "40 Pale Pink Gifts that are Perfect for the Millennial in Your Life", November 9, 2017, <http://www.elledecor.com/design-decorate/color/g9203971/pale-pink/>
3. "Is There Some Reason Millennial Women Love This Color?", August 2, 2016, <https://www.thecut.com/2016/07/non-pink-pink-color-trend-fashion-design.html>
4. "What We Talk About When We Talk About Millennial Pink", July 2, 2017, <https://www.salon.com/2017/07/02/watch-what-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-millennial-pink/>