

The changing colour of CHANEL's lipstick ranges from 1960 to 2015

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ABSTRACT

We compiled the history of CHANEL's range of lipsticks between 1960 and 2015 by studying the colour charts carefully kept in the company's archives. The chosen colour space is NCS System as the representation of hue, blackness and chromaticness are easy to communicate to non-colour experts. The number of shades increased steadily between 1960 and 2005, rising from 12 shades in 1960 to 55 shades in 2005. From the colour point of view, there is a predominance of orangey tones. Reds were always present. Bluish reds were in constant decline compared with other shades: fewer in number, with a shorter life on the markets and more unstable in Chanel's offer. In terms of clarity, dark shades ranging to nearly black are in the great majority. As regards chromaticness, there is continuity in the saturated shades, especially the reds. Lastly, the shades are fashioned with a high degree of subtlety as they are often very close to one another in the colorimetric space. At CHANEL, the delicacy of the shades is due to their colorimetric fashioning with all the subtlety typical of the brand

KEYWORDS

Lipsticks, evolution, colour, colour charts, CHANEL, hue, NCS

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Nicolas Rolland is colorist in Chanel Colour Development laboratory for 5 years. Previously, he worked in l'Oreal, also as colorist. He has an expertise in color data management and achieved the measures of colour-charts for this study.

After History of Art studies, **Julie Deydier** worked in Manufacture de Sèvres (china), Musée Galliéra (Paris City Fashion Museum), and joined CHANEL Heritage Department in 2003. She has been working more precisely on Fragrance and Beauty heritage for 11 years, developing a specialised knowledge on luxury fragrance, makeup and skincare. Particularly interested in colour and its use in beauty, she added her expertise on CHANEL cosmetics in this study.

Patrick Doucet is the CHANEL Fragrance and Beauty Heritage Manager since 25 years and an expert about the Gabrielle Chanel and the brand CHANEL history. His vision is that the Heritage must be a major contributor, in all its significant aspects, to the knowledge and the general development of the brand

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to show how the colour of CHANEL Lipsticks has changed over the past 55 years. Since 1992 make-up products sold by the company have been kept, as have the colour charts, which represent all the available colour ranges in the form of a catalogue (Varichon, 2011). These have been archived since 1930, which is why the decision was taken to work only on colour charts since the range of colours is complete, while in the oldest ranges some lipstick colours are missing. To reveal trends, the colour charts used are at 5-year intervals, unless the colour chart of the desired year is missing. The selected years for the study are 1960, 1963, 1970, 1972, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The correspondence of the colours between a lipstick and its graphical representation in the colour chart was validated by measurement comparison using an X-Rite VS450 contactless spectrophotometer in the CIEL*a*b* colour space, in order not to damage the documents, some of which are old, and unique items in CHANEL's heritage collections. There were few differences between the different colour charts

and the lipsticks, meaning that a scientific study could be conducted without bias.

It should be noted that the high quality of the paper used to make the colour charts of luxury companies and appropriate archiving conditions mean that the documents can be kept for a very long time, and therefore that colour measurements made several years after printing can be used. At CHANEL all the documents are stored in darkness, in rooms kept at a constant temperature of 19°C with 60 % relative humidity (hygrometry). They are handled only with gloves (Colour chart from 1960 - 1963 - 1970 - 1972 - 1980 - 1985 - 1990 - 1995 - 2000 - 2005 - 2010. CHANEL own property). The colour samples of the colour charts are made through paint deposition by a serigraphy process.

The NCS® system was chosen for the measurement of colour charts. The NCS® Colour Scan colorimeter was used to measure the 379 reference shades on the colour charts. Duplicate NCS® references (or references with 3 or more identical references) were eliminated using the NCS® Atlas (by eye, D65 light, X-Rite box) except where no NCS® coordinate allowed a distinction to be made between colours (NCS Color Atlas, 3rd edition, 1996; NCS Color Album, 2nd edition, 1995). Data was entered in the NCS Navigator® application and displayed in the 3D space (ncscolor.com).

Figure 1 - Comparison between colour charts and lipsticks .

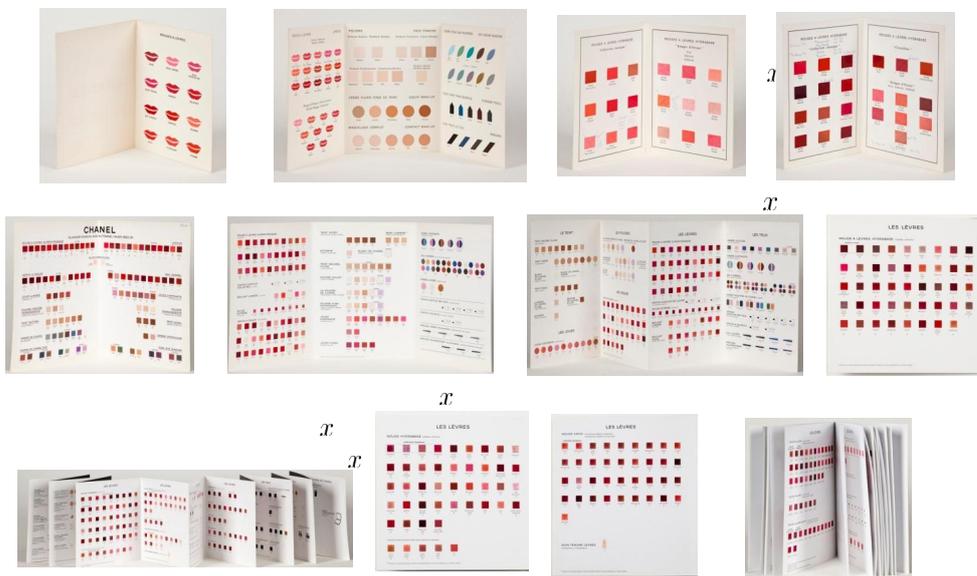


Figure 2 - The studied colour charts store in Patrimony Department from CHANEL. Ranked from top to bottom: 1960, 1963, 1970, 1972, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015. .

Each colour chart measured is characterized (hue, blackness, chromaticness). A comparative analysis between the different years is made (Perec, 2003). This made it possible to determine changes in colour ranges over the years, forming a colour time line specific to CHANEL.

3. RESULTS

The first period identified within the scope of the study was from 1960 to 1970. It is distinctive for the presence of a low blackness level and clear shades, high chromaticness or, the opposite, high desaturation of shades, the creation of 3 classical colours for Chanel and the beginning of chromatic explorations (Galante, 1972). From 1960, there were 12 lip colours, only light shades. Saturated clear reds were already present. 12

additional pearlescent shades appeared in 1963. These were all light and desaturated colours. This is explained by the launch of mica-titanium white pearls in 1959 by the Merck™ company. The saturated reds are retained and *Scintillant* is launched. This Rouge-Orangé (orangey-red) lipstick would be renamed *Sari Doré* in 1972 and still features in the Rouge Coco 2015 lipstick range. In 1970, golden and pale beiges predominated, reflecting the androgynous style first adopted by Twiggy, but also a desire by the CHANEL company to be creative and innovative in the colours it offered (Delay, 1973). In this same year, 2 other classic shades were created: *Téhéran*, is still offered today after 52 years in the Rouge Coco range under the same name (Mollard-Desfour, 2001; 2002), and *Bombay* that would last until 1990. Interestingly,

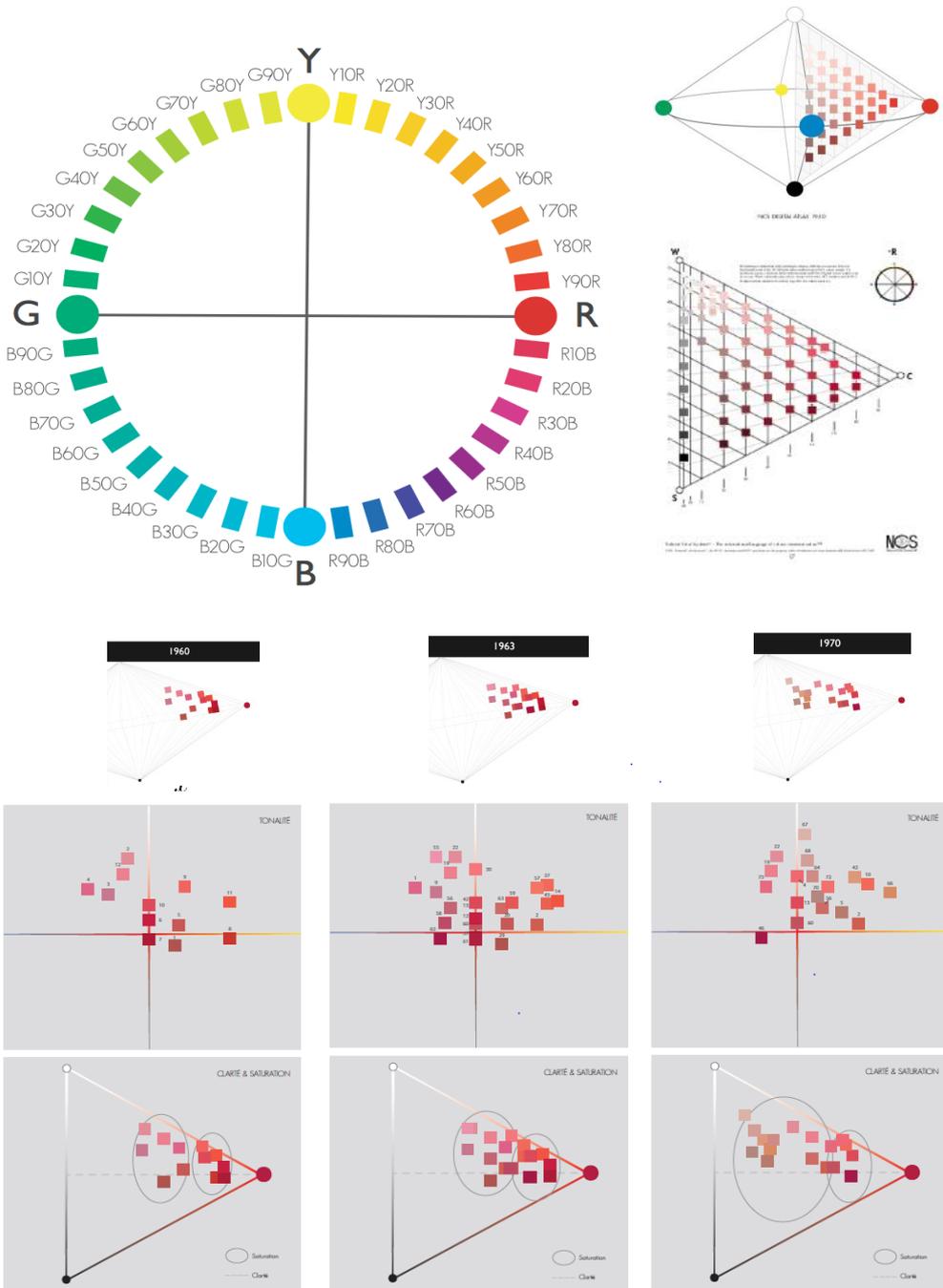


Figure 3 - The chosen colour space is NCS System. The 3D representation of hue, blackness and chromaticness are easy to communicate to non-colour experts

Figure 4 - First period is from 1960 to 1970: Low blackness level, creation of 3 classical shades for CHANEL and beginning of chromatic explorations.

Jackie Kennedy's visit to India in 1962 would influence the names given to CHANEL products, names such as *Bombay, Sari Doré, Delhi, Ispahan*. The second period is from 1972 to 1980. It is characterized by the introduction of very dark shades, not only breaking away from medium light shades, but also establishing CHANEL's colour basics for its lipsticks. The range was still in beige tones but had darkened towards browns. In 1980, *Fauve* was the precursor of the red-blacks dear to CHANEL. Few very bright colours except a few bright reds survived from earlier years. The *Sari Doré* colour, still present in CHANEL's range today, made its appearance

under its permanent name. The predominance of orangey reds was affirmed to the point that only one bluish-red was offered in the range of 1972. In 1980, the range offered 30 shades and saw the inclusion of an increased number of browns. These browns continued the changes begun in 1972 by reducing the differences between the colours. The shades were very closely packed in the colorimetric space, which created an increasingly subtle differentiation between them. The shades rooted in the brand's DNA appeared: *Printemps Doré*, now *Marie, Prunelle* now called *Cécile, Pivoine* which has become *Arthur, Feu* which is *Gabrielle* and *Bois*

Figure 5 - Second period is from 1972 to 1980: Introduction of very dark shades and establishment of CHANEL's colour basics for its lipsticks.

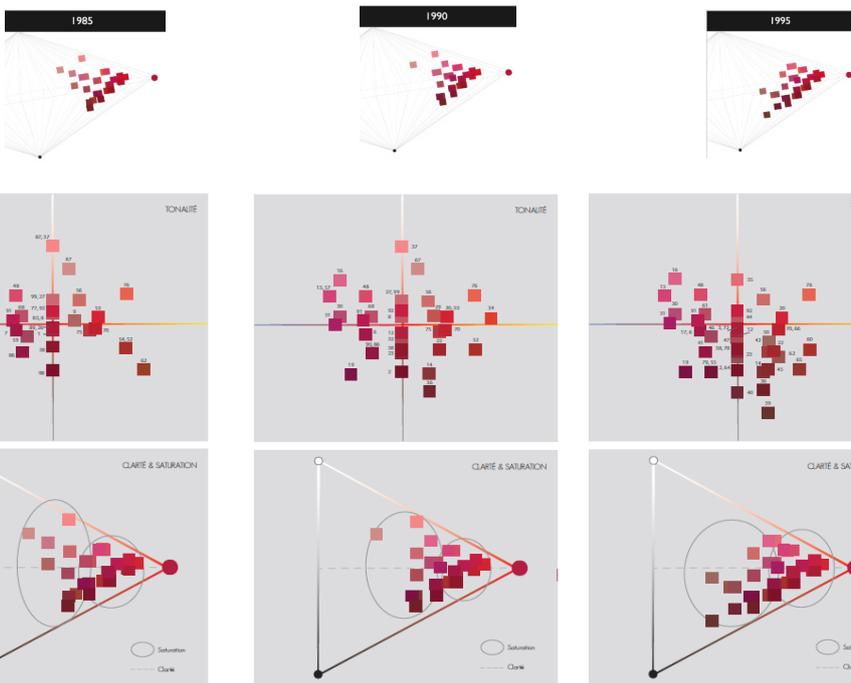
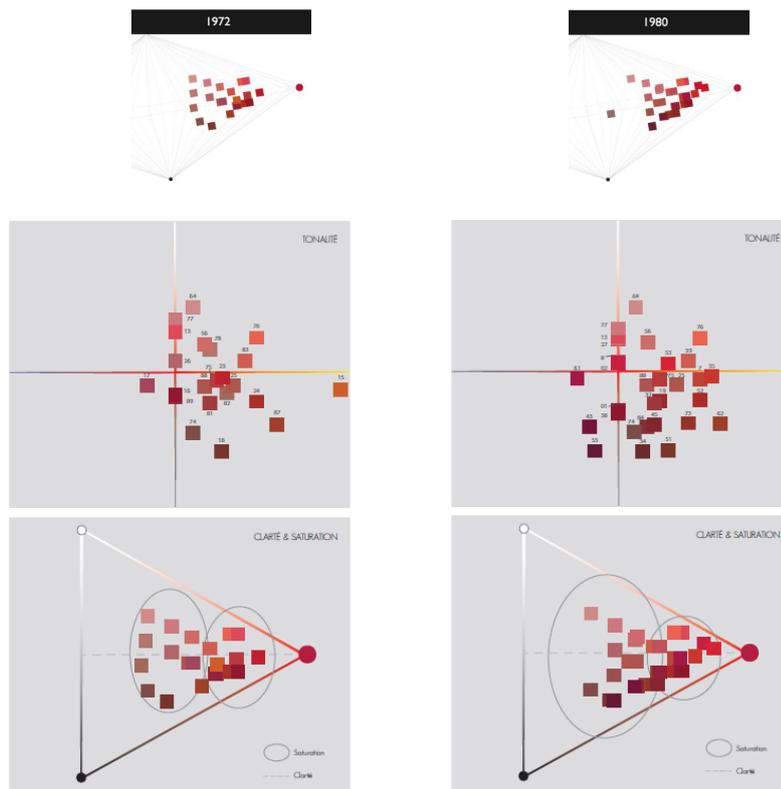


Figure 6 - Third period is from 1985 to 1995: Presence of bluish reds and of very similar tones

Doré which is now *Misia*. Although the range is darker, a few saturated reds persist. Despite the death of Gabrielle CHANEL in 1971, CHANEL's colour positioning continued to be rolled out: the predominance of orangey-reds, deep shades, the close similarity of subtly different shades in order to differentiate the range and the presence of saturated reds.

A third period covers the years between 1985 and 1995. It is distinctive not only for the presence of bluish reds – a very temporary phase at CHANEL – but also for the constancy of an offer of darker and darker shades and very similar tones. In 1985, the colour range was very balanced: the range offered 30 shades, 10 of which were still orangey tones divided between light and dark shades although the very desaturated browns of 1980 had disappeared. Bluish colours reappeared in light or dark shades and a group of highly saturated reds remained. In 1990, the colour chart presented 35 bright colours. The bluish shades were light or dark and sometimes highly saturated. The range of reds expanded to the point that the shades overlap in the colorimetric space. The orangey shades were more individualised and brighter than before. In 1995, CHANEL offered 42 shades of lipstick that explored dark tones.

The very light shades vanished. Only 6 light and with high chromaticness colours, including *Sari Doré*, maintained brightness. Through an innovative blend of black and red, CHANEL's *Vernis Rouge Noir* was created for the Autumn-Winter 1994 catwalk show. A lipstick of the same colour was launched in 1996. During this decade, the similarity of the shades created translated into the existence of a number of duplicates: several lipsticks register on exactly the same NCS reference. This means that the

shades are very similar as a group but look different when applied because of a more or less marked transparent effect or a pearly sheen.

The fourth and last period is from 2000 to 2015. It is characterized by very deep shades, a marked low chromaticness as a result of nudging the center of the colorimetric space, particularly in 2000, an over-representation of orangey-reds and the similarity of the shades offered. In 2000, deep shades were offered with two very dark shades included in the range: *Brun Sortilège* and the iconic *Rouge Noir*. This time *Sari Doré* was still the only light and saturated colour. The number of shades and their close juxtaposition made it hard to discriminate to such levels of desaturation. In 2005, CHANEL offered 55 shades in order to meet the needs of worldwide business. This range was made lighter by the return of low chromaticness light shades, designed for the Asian market, even though dark shades continued to predominate (Varichon, 2011). In 2010, the range refocused on 37 shades but discarded all bluish shades with the exception of *Rose Comète*. The exclusion under cosmetics regulations of Red 19 and Red 9 in the 1990s, both natural fuchsia pink pigments, explains the difficulties of formulating bluish shades of lipstick. It retained a predominance of dark and desaturated shades going to almost black. High chromaticness shades, with the exception of *Sari Doré*, were discontinued. This decade showcased the “Near-blacks” with measurements that fell very low on the clarity axis and very high desaturation levels (Morand, 1976). The shades overlapped in the NCS colorimetric space, which shows that the different shades were worked to the limits of the ability to distinguish one from the other.

In 2015, the range comprises 28 shades

Figure 7 - Fourth and last period is from 2000 to 2015: Confirmation of very dark shades and low chromaticness, predominancy of orangey-red and very similar tones

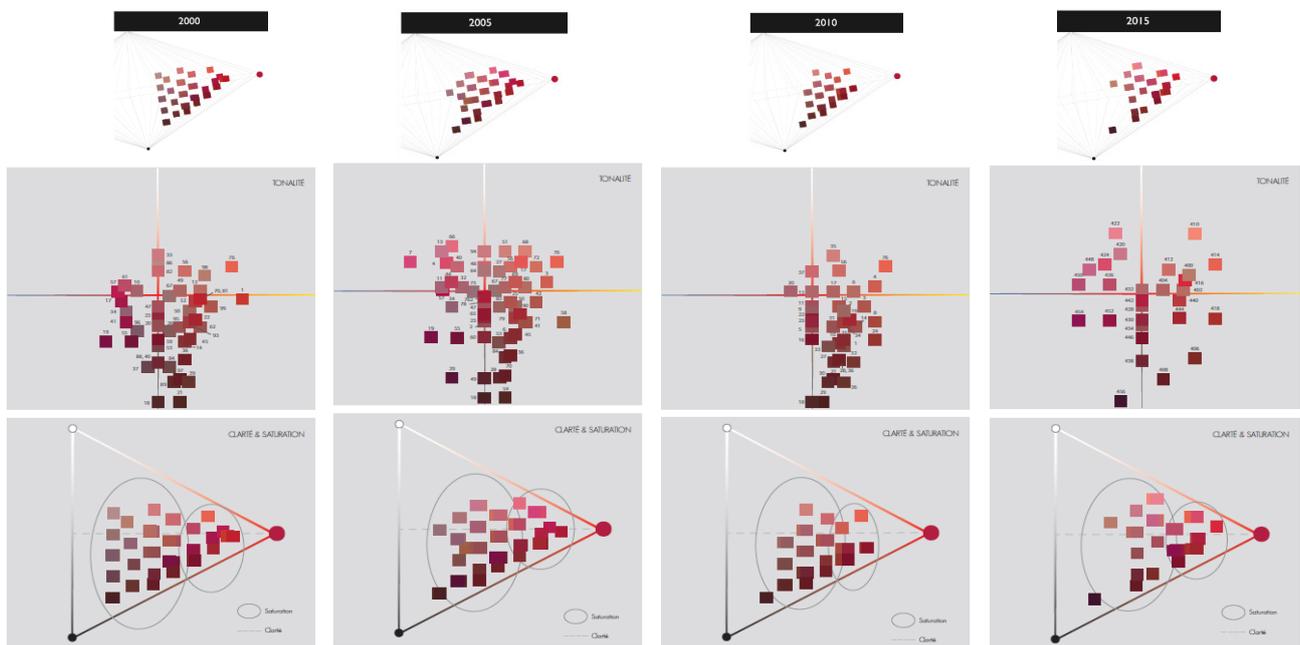


Figure 8 - Colour Time Line for the Orangey Red Lipsticks. The vertical axis represents the years studied. The horizontal axis represents the NCS references ranked from the lower to the higher blackness. Each coloured rectangle is the representation of a lipstick mentioned on a colour chart.

distinctive for their variety and brightness. Colours are deployed in the colorimetric space, reconnecting with the individualised tones that had been eliminated since the 1970s. The range has rediscovered a balance not only between orangey, red and bluish shades, but between light and dark shades too.

4. DISCUSSION

Hue:

If one has to identify the signature lipstick shades specific to CHANEL, this is what appears

to emerge from this study:

Predominance and constancy of the orangey colours. These are present as beiges and browns, but also as vivid tones. The most emblematic are *Sari Doré*, reference NCS 2070-Y90R which has been present since 1972 with 10 occurrences and *Téhéran* under NCS reference 2050-Y90R present since 1963, or 52 years and 11 occurrences at the time of the study.

The saturation of the reds. There are fewer of

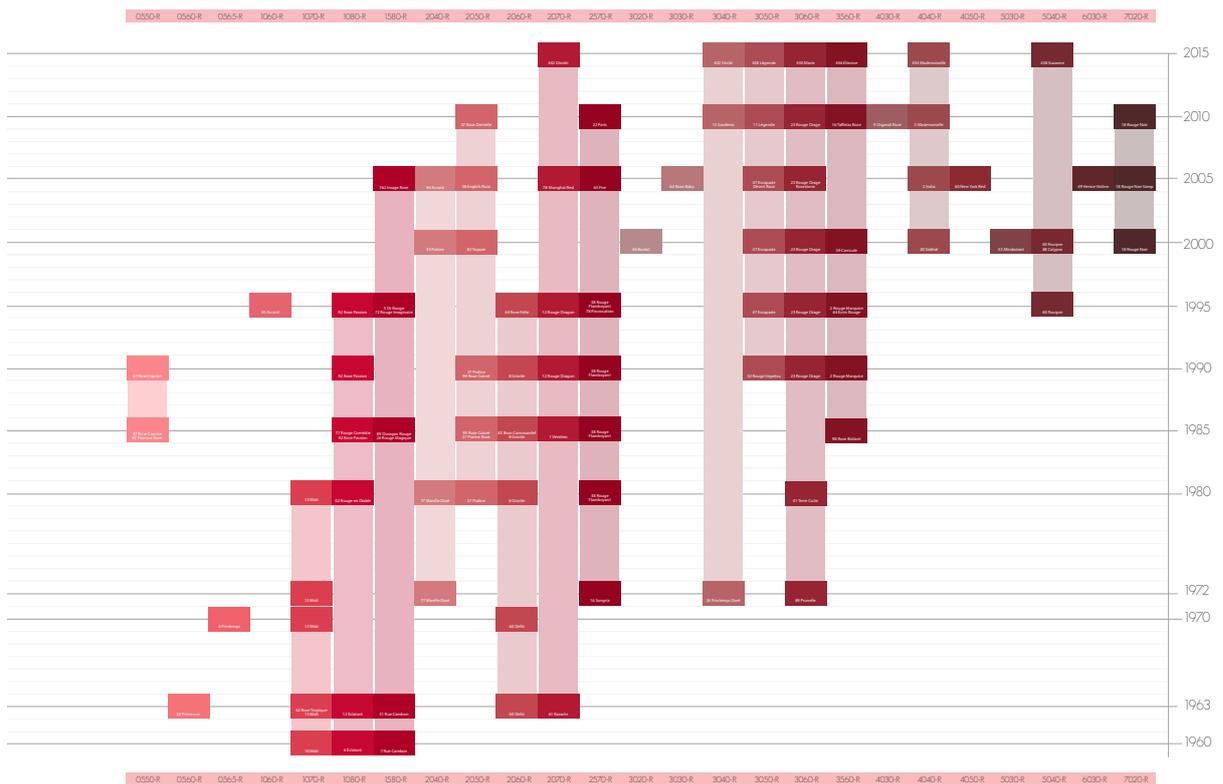


these than there are orangy colours, but their saturation makes them stand out. Reds such as *Rouge Noir*, with 3 occurrences, reference NCS 7020-R, are all intense, and have become iconic. One can also mention Paris, reference NCS 2570-R, and Marie, reference NCS 3560-R, both repeated in 8 occurrences. The reds have exceptional longevity at CHANEL: a red shade remains on the market for 19 years on average. So there is little novelty but real fidelity over time, which shows that the true reds suit

CHANEL's customers.

The discretion of blue tones. No signature specific to CHANEL emerges. Only one shade representative of this tonality appears twice in the ranges: *Bruyère* in 1972, as well as *Rose Comète* in 2010. Amongst the longest lasting blues, reference NCS 2060-R10B is repeated on 6 occasions and reference 2070-R10B is repeated on 8 occasions.

Figure 9 - Colour Time Line for the Blue and Red Lipsticks. The vertical axis represents the years studied. The horizontal axis represents the NCS references ranked from the lower to the higher blackness. Each coloured rectangle is the representation of a lipstick mentioned on a colour chart



Blackness:

Dark colours are in the majority, and include near-blacks. Except for the years 1960, 1963 and 1970, when the ranges only had light colours, from 1972 most colours have been dark. Dark does not mean dull: *Rouge Noir* is dark and very vivid. The years 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010, in particular, developed dark tonalities. Since 2000 the dark colours have been very close to black in the chromatic space. There is only one colour with this degree of black in the 2015 range, but more than 3/4 of the range was in this category at the apogee of the “near-blacks”.

Chromaticness:

Vividness is confirmed unambiguously. All the ranges contain many saturated colours, whichever year is considered, and whatever the brightness or tonality of the lipsticks. The 2 most restrained ranges are 2005 and 2010, years marked by dark colours. Conversely, 1995, which was also very dark, was full of contrasts, as it is one of the most vivid ranges. The 3 highest chromaticness ranges are 1980, 1990, and 1995, within which the most intense colours are *Garance*, *Rouge de Minuit* and *Rouge Podium*, respectively.

From 1960 CHANEL sold 12 lipsticks, quite a broad choice compared to other cosmetic brands at the time. The colour offer exploded in the following years, reaching 55 shades in 2005. CHANEL has always explored chromatic areas, first by offering low chromaticness Beiges from 1970 the near-blacks from 1980. Bright reds have been a constant in the brand's offer.

Finally, 3 documents that summarize all hues present in the ranges were created. They are called Colour Time Lines. One is dedicated to Orange Red lipsticks and the header is yellow. The second one is dedicated to Blue lipsticks and the third to Red lipsticks. In this publication, Blue and Red lipsticks all come together. The band that underlines the Colour Time Line is blue for the bluish lipsticks and red for the red ones. If all the ranges under study are considered, it can be seen that colour differences between the different lipsticks have reduced since 1980. The colours have become closer to one another in the colorimetric space, making it ever more difficult to distinguish one colour from another. The number of colours and their close juxtaposition sometimes makes it difficult to discriminate between them.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Through the analysis of the in-house colour charts, the history of CHANEL lipstick colour from 1960 to 2015 was written. The main lines that CHANEL is drawing that are its own characteristics are the one following: For the

hue, there is a predominance of orangey-red tones, a saturation of the reds and a shyness of blue tones. For the blackness, there is a huge majority of dark colours, including near-blacks. For the chromaticness, there is a constancy of saturated colours. There is a huge increase of the numbers of shades proposed to the customers starting from 12 shades in 1960 and growing up to 55 shades in 2005. And as already mentioned, the colours are very close one from each other in the colorimetric space and can be near similar excepted a pearlescent or satiny effect.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with other people or organizations.

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