



## MEXICAN PINK: COLOR IDENTITY FOR A NATION

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Mexican people are renowned all over the world for their spontaneousness and charismatic culture, which also give them their charming and vivacious identity as individuals: the color *rosa Mexicano* or Mexican Pink forms a part of that cultural identity. We are investigating the origin of this color and would like to prove that the term indeed represents a color that has long been embedded in indigenous traditions and later Mestizo manifests, although it appears that this color did not have a name in Spanish before the last century.

The word *rosa* comes from Spanish, and is of Latin origin; it designates both the color and the flower “rose”. In Mexico however the Spanish word *rosa* seems to have acquired additional meaning and therefore represent a red-purple color which is technically both bright and saturated. Mexican pink has been associated with the bugambilia flower color, an ornamental climbing plant. The original reference are the colors or pigment variants used in typical garments and others objects, like artifacts or basketry, of the traditional Mexican culture. Mexican pink began to be known after 1950 - thanks to fashion designer Ramón Valdiosera.

In the middle of 1940, Valdiosera made a long research trip around Mexico where he contacted people from different ethnicities and collected characteristic clothes and typical garments of the different regions. Interested in adapting the traditional Mexican apparel to contemporary fashion Valdiosera went ahead in 1951, to New York for a fashion runway show based on the bugambilia’s bright florid color. On finishing the presentation the international press questioned him on the origin of the color to which Valdiosera answered that the tone of an intense pink, was intrinsic to the Mexican culture comprising such varied objects as popular toys, ethnic garments, candies and popular architecture. In Mexico several things pertaining to daily life and usage was painted with this tone. This constitutes the moment, from when Ramon Valdiosera supposedly gave a name to the color intrinsic to Mexico: subsequently he became well-known as one of the most important and famous fashion designers who changed and gave high fidelity to Mexican Fashion. Valdiosera had made a visible contribution to the national project of color uses in Mexico. Since that moment, the color was announced to the world as the Mexican pink, a color that became in part a national identity, summarizing the idiosyncrasy and nature of a people, a choice of a color that defines their way of life.

Mexican pink is already in the nature, in plants and flowers and sometimes it is used for dying the fabric and garments created by Mexican craftsmen. Some of the materials mainly used are the *Grana Cochinilla*, an insect, the Aztecs called



*Nocheztli* meaning blood of the *tuna*, a parasitic insect which feeds on the nopal.

The other pigment material is Cinnabar, which is a volcanic, toxic material and difficult to extract, it is composed of 85 % Mercury and is extracted from Querétaro's Sierra Gorda and was used by the Olmecs and Mayans; however, it stopped being used when the red pigment of cadmium appeared because the latter was not poisonous. Another natural pigment is Palo de Campeche or Palo de tinte, which is boiled in water and softened for one week, to generate a red ink in which the garments are submerged in order that they may be impregnated with color. El Palo de Campeche produces a variety of tones that range from the intense vermillion to the malvarrosa, purple, brown and black. Also the *Tuna cardona* that is a purple fruit of the nopal, is peeled, bitten and boiled in water to extract a red juice with which the Mixtecos tacuates of Santiago Ixtayutla painted their thin geometrical designs in their *huipiles*, a type of big loose Mayan overshirt. Another pigment is the *Achiote*, which is a seed used for seasoning, flavor and coloring as well as for using like a corporal body painting and sanctorial coloration; in previous years it was sent to China to dye fabrics and used also as a sedative. In fact it is possible to find in Yucatan and Campeche. Finally the *Caracol Purpura*, a snail, when it is detached from the marine rocks where they grow, tries to defend itself, with the help of a glandular secretion. This liquid is spilt on cotton hanks and in touch with air produces different tones of color coming up to violet. The Caracol snail is on the coasts of the Pacífico oaxaqueño, in Huatulco.

We could therefore find Mexican pink in everything pervaded by these material pigments and dyes of Mexican cultural life since preColombian times including clothes, the fronts of the houses and buildings, paintings and photographs, the traditional toys, the festivities of the country, the food, flowers and fruits, candies and other goods that use the dye of pink.

**“Marca Mexico” as a symbol of the country.** The concept of the Marca Mexico seeks to project the immense diversity of our country in all its richness, warmth and happiness. The identity of our motherland is based on the result of the intersection of realities across the time, which come out of pre-Hispanic heritage and the richness of the seasonal stage, and for the modern contemporary nation of Mexico with its fertile land and bounties full of nature's other kindnesses.

Mexico is also associated with a bright colors and the range of chromatic values with opposite color temperatures (warm strident and bright) that project the visual richness of this country; *magenta* (called Mexican pink) is the pigment generated by Mexican deep time ancestors and is symbol of the Mexican charm. Marca México, with its colors, tries to communicate to the rest of the world how it is to be and feel in Mexico, and be a part of the people, customs and traditions; it tries to develop an identity of the country.

Mexico is an ancient culture (fig. 1) and an original society; rich in history, traditions and nature; nice and ingenious people. Mexico is a country of light, rich in colors and flavors. Mexico is a bridge of meetings between the ancient tradition and the modern avant garde.



Figure 1 – Typical objects in a Mexican culture

The combination of cultural diversity, flexibility and adaptation positions Mexico as a country with roots, and with traditions and with aspirations towards modernity. Mexico every time stands out more for its culture and beauty, with its places and people. In each of the happy bright colors like pink, green, yellow and magenta of Marca Mexico you can find reflected in one or the other states of the Mexican republic, like Cancún, Michoacán, or Guanajuato, etc.

**Conclusions.** Mexico, country of light, and merger of cultures and eternal smile of the people. Mexican pink is included in the array of iconolingüistic symbols of the whole of Mexican culture. Within Mexico *rosa Mexicano* is considered as an element of its national identity and a symbol of Mexican charisma.

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