

COLORS IN THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

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Abstract

Companies achieve great benefits when they sell products and services abroad. The advantages of International trade are numerous, such as efficient allocation and better utilization of resources, efficiency in production, increased revenues, more employment, higher market share, longer product lifespan, enhanced reputation, etc. Without a thorough marketing research of the foreign (local) market, as well as the understanding of cultural peculiarities, many companies, even the famous ones, are making mistakes that can jeopardize their business. International marketing blunders are related to poor translations of slogans into a different language, unacceptable product designs, inappropriate or ambiguous brand names, packaging methods, and even the use of colours and visual effects.

For the importance of the colours in International marketing, a research speaks that found that 93% of consumers focus on visual appearance, and close to 85% claim colour is a primary reason when they make a purchase. It is known that the colour can attract attention, can stimulate emotional responses, can influence the perception of individuals, can influence on attitudes formation, improves learning and persuasion of consumers to buy a particular product. Colour affects the human behaviour and the purchasing decision making. As a brand's identity element, companies must be careful when they use it in the product itself, packaging, product's logo, slogan, display, name, design, signage. Colour meanings differ dramatically from culture to culture. There are a range of cultural influences that affect the usage of a specific colour: political and historical associations (flag colours, political parties), mythological and religious associations (references to colour in spiritual texts), linguistic associations (idioms and expressions), tradition (weddings, funerals, children birth, graduation), etc.

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1. Introduction

A color wheel is the best tool for understanding colors (Dash, 2021). The most basic form illustrates **primary, secondary, and tertiary colors** and how they work

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with or against each other to create color palettes used in art, decorating, and marketing. Primary colors are the three base colors from which all colors are created. Secondary colors are the three colors created by mixing equal parts of two primary colors. There are six tertiary colors created by combining equal parts of a primary and secondary color.

The primary colors are red, yellow, and blue and they are the foundation of all other colors, presented in the most fundamental of elements that humans experience on Earth: fire, water, and sunshine. Red is associated with strong emotions, can incite action, and can even cause physiological changes, all of which impact how consumers make decisions. Yellow is the color of happiness, brightness, and possibility. These ideas spark enthusiasm and draw customers to a product or service. Blue is the color of peace and tranquillity. Consumers can trust in the stability and calm of a product using this color.

Secondary colors are orange, green, and purple. Orange, the combination of red and yellow, provides the excitement of red with the optimism of yellow. This creates the idea of encouragement and results with positive feelings. It's something people often look for when choosing brands in any category. Green, the mixture of yellow and blue, is the color of nature. Fresh and soothing, it is the color of new growth, simple origins, and luck. Customers may intuit an idea of abundance or refreshment from this color too. Purple, the mixture of red and blue, is the color of royalty and magic. It conveys a sense of luxury, imagination, and wisdom, suggesting a brand can deliver the best of the best in what it offers.

A tertiary color is made by mixing an equal amount of a primary color with a secondary color. Examples include aqua or teal which are combinations of blue and green. Magenta is a combination of red and purple. Amber is a combination of yellow and orange. Tertiary colors play an important role in color psychology because they add deeper and more varied colors to the brand palette.

Dash, also talks about **warm and cold colors**. **Warm colors** consist of red, yellow, and orange in various combinations. They are considered warm because they are likened to elements associated with heat, such as fire, sunlight, and lava. They are known to heighten emotions and passions, creating feelings of joy, playfulness, enthusiasm, and creativity. Frito Lay uses the color meanings of red and yellow to convey anticipation in craving a delicious chip and the satisfaction you feel as you satiate your hunger.

Cool colors are blue, green, and purple, in various combinations. They are thought of as cool because they relate to elements associated with cold, such as water, grass, and trees. They bring feelings of calmness, relaxation, and rejuvenation. Green is the color of Sprite, a light, refreshing beverage made from the pure, natural flavours of lime and lemon.

Cultural differences may have an effect on consumers' behaviour (Hermeking, 2005). Thus, for being successful on global scene, companies should

consider the cultural habits of consumers and existing communication practices. There are different classifications of culture, starting from single dimension models, such as high-context vs. low-context (Hall, 1976) to models with six dimensions (Hofstede, 2017). The concept of high/low-context cultures goes in line with Hofstede's (2017) description of individualistic/collectivistic cultures (Broeder, 2018). Asian cultures more commonly can be characterised as high-context and collectivistic cultures: personal touch is very important, relationships are closer and little needs to be said, in order to be understood. The preferred communication style is more informal, indirect and often based on symbols or pictures. High-context cultures make more use of implicit information (Hofstede, 2011). On the contrary, people from Western cultures (low-context and individualistic) prefer explicit information. This means that they wish to know the specific contents of what one is saying and rely heavily on written word.

So, what are the best colors in Marketing? The truth is that there are no "best" marketing colors. It all depends on the brand image the company wishes to convey, whether bold, sophisticated, friendly, reliable, or creative, and the response it wants to elicit from customers. The choice depends on the company itself.

2. Methodology

For the purposes of this paper, quantitative statistics were used as well as the comparative method. Namely, an analysis of the theoretical knowledge for usage of proper colour in international marketing is made. Practical experiences use examples from the Internet and from various electronic websites. Also for this paper an extensive marketing domestic and foreign literature is consulted.

3. Analysis and discussion

Colours affect **different people in different ways**. Colours influence the way people feel, think and behave. Cimbalò et al. (1978) tested the relationship between colours and emotions and found that yellow, orange and blue are the happiest colours, and red, black and brown are the saddest.

In a multicultural study, Wieggersma and Vander Elst (1988) found that **blue** was the most preferred, universally acceptable, most recognizable colour among cultures. Blue is associated with sky and sea, natural phenomena well-known the world over, that gives a sense of inner stability. Blue is known for its trust, tranquility, wisdom, reliability and mentally soothing. The colour blue, this calming colour, is raised on a pedestal in Asian cultures as a sign of immortality. According to Interbrand, more than a quarter (26%) of the world's 100 most valuable brands use blue as a dominant colour in their logo. Companies that rely on blue to create a strong brand presence include IBM, GE, Intel, Nokia, HP, American Express and Gillette (Dash, 2021). Blue is sometimes associated with authority or discipline (many shades

of blue used by police officers and military personnel). However, in Iran, blue is a colour of mourning.

In Western civilizations, **green** is the colour of nature, progress, good health, vitality, growth, balance, harmony, but also money and envy. In the Middle East it is a sacred colour that means strength, fertility, happiness and wealth.

The colour green is found among the world's leading brands. Five out of the top 100 global brands, Google, eBay, Sprite, Heineken, and Starbucks, use green (Dash, 2021). Green is actually one of the most positive colours that marketers can choose on a global scale. It is used in stores to relax customers and promote environmental issues. Green shows that Starbucks hopes to promote a sense of relaxation in its cafes, inviting customers to come in for a coffee break during a stressful day.

However, in China green is often associated with infidelity. A green hat is a symbol that a man's wife is being unfaithful. In North Africa, green symbolizes corruption, whereas in Japan, green signifies eternal life. Green is considered to be a symbol of bad news in Israel. In many Latin and South American cultures, green is the colour of death.

The **red** colour of Western cultures evokes both positive and negative emotions, i.e. on one hand love, passion, excitement, and on the other hand anger, aggression, power, danger. This colour in India, as well as in China (famous Chinese red restaurants) symbolizes good luck, long life, happiness, prosperity and joy. At weddings, the bride wears red. During holidays and other special occasions, gift-giving includes red envelopes containing money.

Attention-grabbing red is also a popular shade for top global brands. Coca-Cola, McDonalds chose red as their dominant colour as it encourages appetite and thirst. In China, red is even more popular among leading brands, with exactly half of the country's top 10 brands using this colour (Dash, 2021).

But red in the Middle East is considered a "devilish" colour, and in South Africa as a colour of pain and mourning. The red section of the country's flag represents the bloodshed, both in terms of violence and sacrifice, that occurred during the country's struggle for independence. The Japanese flag is a white rectangle with a central crimson-red disc. Perhaps this is why most Japanese children often draw the sun as a large red circle.

Orange in Western cultures is associated with harvest, early autumn, heat, the changing leaves and a candle's glow in a pumpkin's carved smile. In the Netherlands is the colour of the royal family. There's a phenomenon in the Netherlands called Oranjegekte (orange craze) that occurs during major sporting events, the F1 Grand Prix, and an annual holiday that celebrates the king's birthday. When the orange craze takes over the Dutch they wear orange clothing and decorate their cars, houses, shops, and streets in orange. It started as a way to celebrate the Dutch royal family, the House of Orange-Nassau (Dash, 2021).

Orange is also known to be a colour of motivation, lends a positive attitude, and general enthusiasm for life. Overall, orange is great for bringing comfort in tough times, and creating a sense of fun or freedom. Harley Davidson uses orange to communicate adventure, excitement, and vitality. The Western world also associates orange with frivolity and amusement. Clowns often wear orange wigs.

In Tibet it is a sacred colour (saffron). In the Middle East this colour is synonymous with pain and sorrow.

Yellow is the epitome of joy, happiness, cheerfulness, optimism, because it is synonymous with sunshine, warmth, light and hospitality in many Western cultures. Anything happy is almost always yellow. Yellow is the most visible colour on the spectrum and the first colour the human eye notices. Yellow is the first colour infants respond to. The yellow ochre pigment dates back thousands of years, and thus was one of the first colours in human artwork. For example, the Lascaux cave in France has a 17,000-year-old painting of a yellow horse.

In China, yellow has strong historical and cultural associations. The first emperor was called the Yellow Emperor. After the Song Dynasty, which ended in 1279, only the emperor was allowed to wear bright yellow. Distinguished visitors to China were honored with a yellow carpet.

Yellow is a sacred colour in Polynesia, considered to be the colour of divine essence. In local languages, the word for yellow is the same as the name of the curcuma longa plant, which is thought to be the food of the gods.

In Africa, only the upper classes can wear this colour as a sign of rank, wealth and money. The more gold variations of the colour are universally associated with money, quality and success in most world cultures.

Yellow is used to express happiness and warmth in most parts of North America. Latin America, conversely, sees yellows as a sign of death, sorrow and mourning. In Germany it is the colour of envy.

In France, its connotations are more sinister, evoking thoughts of weakness, contradiction, betrayal and jealousy. In the 10th century, French criminals' and traitors' doors were daubed in yellow paint, clearly marking their shortcomings for all to see.

In the West, the colour **purple** associates with royalty, fame, power, wealth, wisdom, as well as mystery and new ideas. Purple is often used to show luxury, loyalty, courage, mystery, and magic. It stimulates problem-solving as well as creativity. It also means modernization and progress. Hallmark, Yahoo, Craigslist uses this colour. It is also seen frequently promoting beauty and anti-aging products (Dash, 2021).

In Thailand and Brazil, it is a colour of death and mourning. Thai widows wear purple, as do devout Catholic mourners in Brazil.

Italy also strongly associates purple with funerals. Therefore, Italians consider wrapping a gift in purple paper poor taste, and brides avoid the colour when planning their big day. It's even considered bad luck to wear purple to an Italian opera.

Black, is almost everywhere in the world an association of mortality, end, formality, sorrow, even evil in Thailand and Tibet. It is also considered a mystical colour. Black is a colour of sophistication, seriousness, control, and independence. It is associated with authority, power, stability, confidence, and strength. Often a symbol of intelligence, it can become overwhelming if used too frequently.

Black is tricky to use in marketing, but some have done it successfully. On global scene, Nike and Chanel use this colour successfully. Nike's logo, a combination of black and white, evokes power, strength, and stability. Chanel uses black to convey luxury, elegance, sophistication, timelessness, and maybe a hint of mystery. These prove to be precisely the qualities Coco Chanel created her brand to embody (Dash, 2021).

Eastern and Asian cultures Black can be connected to masculinity and is the colour for boys in China. It also represents wealth, health and prosperity. Latin cultures also associate the colour with masculinity and is the preferred colour for men's clothing. It is also linked to mourning. Middle East Black has somewhat contrasting but symbiotic meanings – it represents both rebirth and mourning. Evil and mystery are also associated with black.

White is the colour of peace, purity, innocence, cleanliness, sterility and peace. White can also represent new beginnings, providing a blank slate, and gives refreshment for new ideas. White is a great colour for simplicity, cleanliness, and idea creation; however, it has to be avoid using too much as it can cause isolation, loneliness, and emptiness. The Bedouin (Arab-speaking nomads of the Middle Eastern deserts), associate white with milk. As camel milk is a staple food for the people, highly nutritious, good for the bones, and a strengthener of the immune system, it makes sense that white is considered the colour of gratitude, fertility, and joy.

Many are familiar with the Western tradition of brides in white dresses. Some believe this dates back more than 2,000 years to the Roman Republic, when brides wore white tunics to represent their chastity. The modern trend came into fashion thanks to Queen Victoria, who in 1840 chose to wear a white lace gown instead of the coronation robes of royal tradition (Dash, 2021).

It may not be the best colour for every business. But using white in marketing can be effective for a minimalist brand or approach. Subway's use of white suggests the blank slate concept. It is your sandwich to create, with endless possibilities offered by fresh, clean ingredients. Lego's brand literally spells out the company name in white on a red background. This represents the fun and excitement children have in playing with a product that provides infinite opportunities for building and creating anything the mind can imagine.

However, not every association with white is pleasant. In many cultures, it's the colour of death, ghosts, and phantoms. As expressed in the English saying "pale as a ghost," the colour is connected to the paleness of death. White also represented death in ancient Egypt because of the colour of the lifeless desert that covered much of the land.

In Asian countries it is a sign of death, sterility, unhappiness and misfortune. Around the world The white flag is the universal symbol of truce.

4. Conclusion

The colors are controversial. Some believe that human color responses are stable, and therefore applicable to everyone, while others disagree and believe that color responses and preferences depend on culture, gender, age, religion. What may prove significant in scientific research may contradict the opinion of marketing experts. It is important for marketing managers to be aware of the importance of colors and their interpretation in different countries and cultures. The colors of the product packaging, the products themselves, the name, the logo, and even the colors of the services can drastically affect the sales. Depending on the target audience, managers should research and choose the most appropriate colors for products and services. Research must be done before launching a new product on the market as the wrong choice of colors can have a negative impact on the image of the product or the company.

In general, red and yellow attract attention, and blue and green are more calming and relaxing. With the reduction of territorial barriers and advances in communications (Internet) it is believed that homogenization in the use of colors around the world will increase. Color can be an important marketing control variable that is not only a direct identifier of the product, but also important for its quality and price.

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