Color Meanings Around the World

Colors are an integral part of a brand strategy. The color palette chosen to represent your brand can subconsciously communicate a variety of messages, and it's been proven through market research that color directly impacts consumers.

With that in mind, I've been looking for a good source to provide some insight into the psychology of color internationally. For example, a color could convey happiness in the United States but mourning in another country. If yours is an international brand, its essential that you consider color meanings throughout the world before you choose the color palette to be used in your logo, marketing materials, etc.

To illustrate my point, following is a list of colors and their cultural meanings in different countries throughout the world adapted from Foundations of Marketing by Jonathan Groucutt:

Red

- Good luck and fortune: China and parts of Africa
- Danger, warning/alert: Europe, America and Australia/New Zealand
- Masculinity: Parts of Europe
- Mourning (dark red): Ivory Coast
- Death: Turkey

Blue

- Immortality: Iran

Purple

- Mourning: Brazil
- Symbol of expense: Asian cultures
- Organic foods, freshness, environmentally friendly, good health: Many Western nations

Green

- High-tech: Japan
- Luck: Middle East
- A forbidden color: Indonesia
- Death: South America and countries with dense jungle areas

Yellow

- Feminine: United States and many countries
- Mourning: Mexico
- Strength and reliability: Saudi Arabia

Pink

- Feminine: United States

Black

- Mourning as well as style and elegance: Most Western nations
- Trust and high quality: China

White

- Mourning: Japan and other Far Eastern nations
- Cleanliness and purity: Western nations

Brown

- Disapproval: Nicaragua

Of course, this list is not all-inclusive, but it provides some good examples of how colors can have different meanings in different parts of the world. For example, if your business operates in Indonesia, you'll probably want to avoid using the color green to represent your brand since it's a forbidden color in that country. On the other hand, green is considered to be a lucky color in many other parts of the world.

Whatever colors you ultimately choose to represent your brand, make sure they accurately convey the message and image of your brand everywhere your company does business.

Tags: color-in-advertising , color-marketing , international-business