Global Propaganda

Colours Across Cultures: Translating Colours in Interactive Marketing Communications

Mario De Bortoli & Jesús Maroto

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly competitive and saturated market, communication needs to be carefully targeted. Few companies have a brand that is powerful enough to generate a quasi uniform perception world-wide. For most companies it is important to understand what the impact of communication and colour use will be on the targeted group. Therefore it is not only important to understand its meanings but also to find easily applicable rules for translating them.
This short research analyses the impact of colour on consumers belonging to different cultures, and how each of them perceives them.
In the Internet age these differences are particularly relevant to online advertisers since colour is the first thing that you notice on a web site or banner, even before you can understand which language is being used or what the message says. But how to use colours cleverly and what is colour?

1.1 Colour Theory

We can see over 7 million colours. These are built from some basic building blocks:

1. **Primary colours**. Red, blue and yellow are the basis of all other shades, and can't be created by combining other colours. If all three are mixed together in equal amounts, they will make black.
2. **Secondary Colours**. This is the term used to describe the three colours that are created by mixing two primary colours together. There are three secondary colours: violet (made up of red and blue); orange (made up of red and yellow) and green (made up of yellow and blue).
3. **Tertiary Colours**. These come from mixing one primary with one secondary colour. These are six: saffron (red and orange); lime (yellow with green); lavender (blue with violet); purple (red with violet); amber (yellow with orange) and turquoise (blue with green).

When combining white or black to the above-mentioned colours you obtain **tints** and **shades**, while **tones** describe the depth of a colour.
Neutrals are subtle shades from the palest range of colours (beige, cream), and are used for balancing vibrant or rich colours.
Cold colours have a high proportion of blue in their make-up, such as violet blue and some greens, and they have a calming effect.
Warm colours have more red and yellow in their make-up. They are energising.

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1.2 Context

A single colour can have many different meanings in different cultures. In Asia orange is a positive, spiritually enlightened, and life-affirming colour, while in the US it is a colour of road hazards, traffic delays, and fast-food restaurants. Colours can symbolise a rite of passage, differentiate a premium from a discount brand, and distinguish between fun and serious, young and old, male and female. Context is everything: a group of people wearing black might be the crowd at a gallery opening, priests, Mennonites, a punk band, ninjas, Kabuki stagehands, Bedouins, mourners, or a mime troupe.
In addition to all the traditional meanings associated with colours in various cultures (those linked to birth, weddings, funerals or even the colour of the mailbox), there are also those layers of meaning brought about by international marketing and communication: for instance Coca-Cola red.
Concentrating on webvertising, context for a banner is given not only by the cultural context for which it is developed, but also by the Web site on which it is hosted. A clash of colours or meanings between the web site content and the banner could annihilate or even damage the objectives sought by the advertiser.

1.3 Linguistic Relativity and Colours

According to Benjamin Whorf's **Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis** a person's language determines and limits what the person experiences. Not all concepts can be expressed in some languages. This language barrier can affect one's perception of colour. For example, the Shona language in Zimbabwe and the Boas language in Liberia have no words which distinguish red from orange. Therefore, people fail to perceive different colours because of language limitations.
When colour terminology in different cultures is compared, certain patterns are observed consistently. All languages have designations for black and white. If a third hue is distinguished, it is red; next comes yellow or green, and then both yellow and green. Blue is the sixth colour named, and brown is the seventh. Finally, in no particular sequence, the colours grey, orange, pink, and purple are designated.

1.4 Climate and Colour

Even the climate in which we live influences our colour preferences, according to psychologist E.R. Jaensch. Jaensch's research indicates those who live in climates with a lot of sunlight prefer warm bright colours; while those from climates with less sunlight prefer cooler, less saturated colours.

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But the environment and the climate also dictate the way colours are classified, according to the relevance they have in the everyday life. For example, Eskimos use 17 words for white as applied to different snow conditions.

1.5 Gender and Colour

Considering gender differences in colour perception could seem unrelated to cross-cultural localization. A closer look, however, will reveal that these can be found in every society, each with some specific characteristics.
The investigative work existing to date on the subject is very interesting. To give an example of the findings, Radeloff (1990) has found that women were more likely than men to have a favourite colour. In expressing the preferences for light versus dark colours, there was no significant difference between men and women; however, in expressing the preference for bright and soft colours, there was a difference, with women preferring soft colours and men preferring bright ones.
Thomas, Curtis, and Bolton (1978) interviewed 72 Nepalese and asked them to list the names all the colours they could think of. There was a significant difference between men and women. Although, the women consistently listed more colour names than men did, the cultural context of this study must be noted since Nepalese women traditionally wear more colourful clothing than men do. A similar study by Greene (1995) examined the colour identification and vocabulary skills of college students. They were asked to identify the colours of 21 colour chips. The results showed that women recognized significantly more elaborate colours than did the men. Findings also indicated that gender different responses in colour identification may be attributed to a difference in the socialisation of men and women.
These examples show us that gender and cultural differences influence colour perception, a fact that should be held in mind when localizing the colours of a web site or advertisement aimed at women.

1.6 Age and Colour

The use of colour is one of the means psychologists have at their disposal to analyse children. In early childhood colours are used more subjectively than in a naturalistic objective way. From the age of three to six children strongly prefer colour to shapes (the opposite is true at a later stage of development). Bright red can be used by children to express anger, desire to destroy, while the black of the night can be fraught with all the depressive anguishes. The yellow of the sun can stand for a happy desire to communicate and express themselves. Younger children are attracted by strong, warm, and intense

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colours. As time progresses colours become less violent and softer shades appear: colours "cool down". This process continues throughout life, with older people finding 'subdued' colours more attractive.
The findings about age differences in perception seem to indicate that colour intensity should be regulated to match the taste of the targeted age category.

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2. Comparing Colour Preferences and Meanings

All the pieces of research carried out on colour preferences and meaning associations are extremely interesting, but the question is whether these cross-cultural differences in perception have tangible effects on consumer behaviour, and if so, whether these can be measured and ultimately compared.

2.1 Colour Preferences

A study was carried out in eight countries to explore consumers' preferences for different colours and colour combinations.
The results show a cross-cultural pattern of both similarity and dissimilarity in colour preferences and coulour meaning associations. When subjects are asked to match colours for a product logo, some colour combinations suggest a **consistency** in meaning, whereas other combinations suggest colours whose meanings are **complementary**. The presence of such patterns opens the possibility of managing colour to create and sustain brand and corporate images across international markets.

2.2 Colour Meaning Associations

The meanings associated with different colours are important to marketers because the tools used to communicate brand image are mechanisms of meaning transfer. If consumers associate specific meanings with individual colours and colour combinations, managers can select the colours that best fit their image strategy.
The effects of culture on the meaning associated with marketing cues (such as colour) are critical in international marketing. If the meaning associated with a colour or combination of colours is different across cultures, it might be beneficial pursuing a **customised** strategy with respect to the colour associated with the brand, package, web page and so on. In contrast, when colour meanings are similar across markets, a **standardised** strategy is more viable.
To give an example, McDonald's follow a customised web site strategy, with a different web site and different colours in every country.

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2.3 Effect of Colour on Choice

Some researchers maintain that colours are associated with certain images. For example blue is associated with wealth, trust, and security; grey is associated with strength, exclusivity, and success; and orange denotes cheapness. These associations may explain why banks are more likely to colour their logos and literature using blue and grey rather than orange. This theory was put into practice with Wienerschnitzel, a hot dog restaurant with 350 branches across the USA. Wienerschnitzel were advised to add a little orange to the colour of their buildings to convey the message that the chain sold inexpensive hot dogs. After a change in colour, Wienerschnitzel reported a 7% increase in sales.

Colour used in packaging can be equally important in determining a product's desirability. James Mandle, a colour consultant, changed the colour of Ty-d-Bol's toilet bowl cleanser bottle from light blue and green to stark white letters on a dark background to connote strength and cleanliness. In the 18 months that followed the implementation of the change sales jumped 40%.

2.4 Colour Associations Across Cultures

A survey was conducted among high school students in 20 countries, asking them to rate 7 colours in 12 semantic differential items. The results were reported for the dimensions of evaluation, potency, and activity. Blue was the most highly evaluated colour, followed by green and white. The most potent colours were black and red. Red was the most active colour, whereas black and grey were the most passive colours.

In another test, subjects from four cultures (Japan, People's Republic of China, South Korea and the USA) were asked to state which one of eight colours was most closely associated with 13 words often used to describe consumer products. The results indicate some similarities and some dissimilarities across cultures. All four cultures associate blue with high quality and red with love. Purple is associated with expensive for subjects from Japan, PRC, and South Korea. In contrast, respondents from the United States associate purple with inexpensive. Black is consistently associated with expensive and powerful across cultures.

Colour combinations are considered culturally bound with certain ideologies and traditions (Geboy 1996). The combination of colours selected for product logos and communication may convey meaning as a result of the specific colour pairings. For example black and red signifies happiness to Chinese people, and therefore the colour combination is commonly used for wedding invitations. This is very important when choosing the colours for a logo, or the dominant colours of a banner.

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2.5 Research from the Journal of International Marketing

In 1999 American researchers conducted a research in 8 countries to explore the extent to which consumers in different countries like various colours, the meanings they associate with colours, and how they would match colours for a logo.

The results indicated that the colours blue, green and white are well liked across countries and share similar meanings. In contrast, black and red also received high liking ratings, yet in many cases their meanings are considerably different. East Asian groups tend to make the greatest distinctions among colours in terms of their affective meaning, whereas Latin American and US groups make only average amounts of colour distinctions. Results indicate that in many parts of the world, consumers exhibit similarities in colour liking and colour meaning associations. Many intrinsic properties of colours (liking, meaning associations) thus appear to be pancultural. How colours are combined for logos, however, indicates that cultural similarities and differences exist in the ways consumers select colour combinations.

One of the most important innovations of this research was the use of perceptual maps to position colour meaning in different cultures, according to the rating assigned by respondents to each colour on 20 different semantic differential scales.
A consistent pattern of colour clusters emerged for each country. The most striking patterns are the clustering of blue, green, and white and of black and brown. Both of these clusters are evident in all eight countries and imply that, within each country, consumers associate each colour with similar meanings; however the meanings may vary by culture. Gold, orange, and yellow also tend to cluster close to one another and usually near the origin of the maps. Purple is close to gold, orange, and yellow in some countries and close to black and brown in others. Red is the colour that tended not to cluster with any of the other colours. The meanings associated with each of these colour clusters showed both similarities and dissimilarities between countries. This research allowed to get a clearer idea of the positioning of colour meanings in each culture, and also to study the relationships of colour clusters within and across cultures.

A Spectrum of Colour Meaning. An interesting pattern of colours forming a spectrum of meaning is evident across all countries. Close examination of the eight perceptual maps shows that a straight line can be drawn with red on one end and the blue-green-white cluster on the other end. The meaning associations along this spectrum run from 'active', 'hot', and 'vibrant' (associated with red) to 'calming', 'gentle', and 'peaceful' (associated with the

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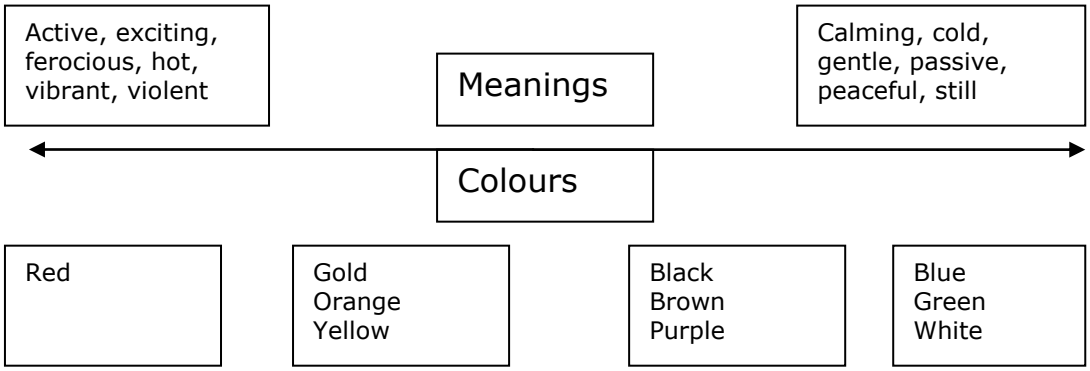
blue-green-white cluster). The remaining six colours tend to locate approximately equidistant between these endpoints. See next figure.



This research also found that respondents from different countries have different tendencies with regard to matching colours in a logo design. More specifically, some groups tend to match or select only colours they like equally (respondents from Hong Kong and Taiwan in particular). Alternatively, other groups of respondents seemed to match colours that share the same meanings, and others paired colours whose associations were complementary.

2.6 Colour Symbolism per Country

Every country and culture attaches certain symbolic values to colours. There are various sources where these symbolic meanings are listed. A useful place where to find them is on the web site:
http://www.webofculture.com/worldsmart/design_colors.asp
(**See appendix 2**)

2.7 The Idiomatic Use of Colours in Languages

Many languages use names of colours to express moods and feelings. In all languages there are numerous expressions in which colour plays an important role. In most cases there is no equivalent in other languages and when translating them literally the meaning is lost.
The English "to feel blue" has no equivalent in other languages while in German "blau sein" (literally: to be blue) means to be drunk or in Russian "голубой" (literally: light blue) means to be homosexual.

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Idiomatic expressions therefore create a different map of colour meanings in every language, thus modifying perception.
(**See appendix 1**)

2.8 The Meaning of Colours in Religions

It is important to remember that religion is an important part of culture, and that in every religion colours have their associations. An inappropriate use of colour can be perceived as offensive. For Shiite Muslims green is sacred, and its use should be undertaken very cautiously. White is the colour of mourning in China. An overabundance of white space around a small isolated image or lettering might hint at funerary meanings.

2.9 Non Cultural Factors

There are many non-cultural factors that can influence colour perception. These include psychological factors, the state of physical and mental health, the technology used, etc.
Among the psychological factors are the visual effects: a stronger or lighter contrast between adjacent colours can influence our perception of each colour. The shape of an object can modify our perception of its colour. A heart-shape cut from orange paper may seem to have a redder hue than a geometric figure cut from the same paper.
As far as health conditions are concerned: schizophrenics are reported to have an abnormal colour perception. Colour blind people have difficulties distinguishing certain colours.
Technology has an influence too, with modifications in colour due to different screens, or to the way images are compressed.

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3. Conclusion

This short analysis shows just how colour can be a critical factor in communication and the power that it can exert on perception in various cultures.

The study of the impact of colours on internet surfers and consumers has been extensive, but it is still at the beginning as far as cross-cultural localization is concerned.

Findings should now be integrated to other research results on webvertising effectiveness such as banner burnout rate (the decrease of effectiveness after a certain number of impressions), integration into the environment, the use of the word 'free', the effect of animation, the development of eye-tracking technology, etc.

In particular the use of colour-cluster research could prove very helpful in identifying clusters of colours with similar meanings, or in deciding whether a colour combination needs changing in order for the ad to retain the same symbolic meaning.

The scope for research and application is very wide, and in a world where only 43% of Web users speak English, with the prospect of them shrinking to 35% by 2005, the importance of every aspect of localization increases steadily.

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Appendix 1

Comparative Analysis of Colour-related Expressions in Western European Languages

By comparing some expressions from different European languages (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish) we discover a number of interesting things. Some expressions are common to all the five languages analysed: **white flag** has the same meaning in all languages (surrender), and **red heat** and **white heat** have their equivalents in every language. The **Greens** are environmentalists in all 5 languages, and intelligent people have a lot of **grey matter** all over Europe. Many Europeans are in **white collar or blue collar** jobs and most of them see **pink elephants** when drunk. Being **in the red** is not desirable in any European country: it's better to be **in the black**. **Red light** districts sell sex and pornography in every country. The aristocracy is **blue-blooded** in all languages.

What is more interesting is to concentrate on some of the differences:

- A British or Italian **black eye** becomes blue in Germany, purple in Spain, and the French add some butter to make it a black-butter eye (*oeuil au beurre noir*).
- If English hooligans **beat you black and blue**, you will notice that the German ones prefer beating you green and blue, while the Italian tifosi make you a plain black.
- If English people are quite glad to be invited to a **black tie** party, because of the glamour it involves, Italians are less enthused at the idea because the kind of party where you wear a black tie involves a coffin, too.
- For the Italians a person with rare qualities is a **white fly** while for the Spanish the same person is **white blackbird**.
- **Blue jokes** turn green in Spain
- Your English, French, Italian neighbours are **green with envy** because of your beautiful garden, while the German one is yellow.
- It probably means that you have **green fingers** (UK), **green hands** (German) or a **green thumb** (Italy).
- In France you are **as white as a sheet**, in Italy **as a cloth**, in Germany **as chalk** or **as the wall.**
- A **white night** is sleepless in French, Italian and Spanish, but not in English.

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- In France and Britain something is **jet-black** or **black like coal**, in Germany it's **black like the night** and in Italy it's **black like ebony** or **like sin**, in Spain it's black like **coal tit.**
- While the egg-white is the same everywhere, the yolk can be **red** (Italy), or yellow (the others).
- **Red wine** turns to black when in Italy, and it is simply coloured (tinto) in Spain.
- When they are scared the French are **green with fear,** while the Italians are blue (fifa blu) or white.
- When hitting the bull's eye, the Germans **hit the black** while the Spaniards **hit the white.**
- The middle traffic light is **amber** in Britain, **yellow** in Italy, Germany and Spain and **orange** in France.
- **Goldfish** are simply red fish for Italians and the French.
- **The Blue Prince** is how Prince Charming is called in Italy and Spain.

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Appendix 2

Colour Symbolism per Country

REGION/ COUNTRY	COLOR	SIGNIFICANCE	EXAMPLES
North America			
United States and Canada	Red	Excitement, warning, sex, passion, adultery, safety rescue, hot, spicy	Color of Canadian flag and dress uniform of Royal Canadian Mountain Police
	Yellow	Visibility, cautionary, happy, sunny, cowardice	Used in U.S. to signal police area; color of taxis; yellow ribbon as symbol for loved one to return home
	Blue	Trustworthy, official business, philosophy, soothing	US mailboxes. Uniforms, blue ribbon, singing the blues
	Green	Environmental, outdoorsy, masculinity, freshness, healthy, envy, jealousy, inexperience	Money, nature, highway signs
	Orange	Visibility, refreshing, danger	Sunsets, fruit, highway signs, prison uniforms
	Purple	Nobility, bravery, law, excess	Bravery medal, college colors
	Pink	Feminity, childhood, fun, sweetness, homosexuality	Baby girls, candy, gay movement
	Brown	Dullness, boring, fertile, strength, unprocessed, poverty	National Park signs, coffee packaging
	Gold	Money, wealth luminosity	Jewelry, architecture, liquor, chocolate
	Black	Death, evil, sin, nothingness, business, adult, formal, sexy	Clothing
	White	Clean, pure, elegant, antiseptic	Paper, building walls, bedding

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	Silver	Sleek, classy, modern	Products for men, tools, car parts
	Gray	Humility, grief, depression, strength, wisdom	Hair color, clothing, concrete, steel
Latin America			
Mexico	Red	Sunny, religion, compass, vibrancy, intensity, death	Aztec color for north, used in national flag
	Yellow	Sun	Folk art
	Blue	Mourning, trust, tranquility	Wear when someone dies
	Green	Vegetation	n/a
	Gold	Wealth, church adornments	Jewelry
	Black	Mourning, religion, respect, death	Cleric robes
	White	Pure, clean, peasant	Peasant clothing
	Silver	n/a	Jewelry; silver mines
Caribbean			
Bahamas, Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico	Red	African roots, nature, animals	Flowers, birds
	Green	Lush vegetation	Animals (Puerto Rico's coqui frog)
	Yellow	African roots, nature, animals	Jamaica's flag, flowers, animals
	Pink	Buildings	Architecture in Puerto Rico
	Blue	Water, animals	Birds
	White	Clean, cool, authority	Police uniforms, jewelry
	Orange	Animals	Trupiaal bird in Aruba

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	Blue	Pirates, death	Hats, eye patches
	Gold	Pirates, riches	Jewelry, pirate treasure
	Silver	Pirates, riches	Jewelry, pirate treasure
	Brown	Alcohol	Caribbean rum
South America			
Argentina	Silver	Gauchos, craftsmanship	Jewelry, knives, belt buckles, saddles
	Red	Craftsmanship	Baskets, pottery
	Blue	Sky, freedom, infinity, blessing, ocean	Travel, goals, ambition, vastness, color of Argentine flag
	Yellow	Wealth, religion, ceremony, visibility	Jewelry, religious relics
	White	Light, cool, purity, accomplishment, aspiration	Clothing, snow
Brazil	Red	Visibility, Vibrancy	Red cars illegal in Brazil due to perception of them causing more accidents
	Purple	Mourning	
	Green	Environment	Symbol of the rainforest
	Orange	Environment	Birds (macaws)
	Brown	Nature	Wood, nuts
	Black	Sophistication, authority, mourning, religion, formality	Religious clothing, widows' clothing, formal clothing
Western Europe	Black	Mourning, formality, death, evil, elegance, sophistication	Formal clothing, widows' clothing
	White	Pure, clean, good, empty, bleak, neutral, antiseptic,	Nurses' uniforms, food packaging

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		surrender	
	Gray	Architecture, ambiguity, wisdom, experience	Concrete, buildings, smoke, ash, fog
	Silver	Masculinity, technology, expensive, craftsmanship	Weapons, shaving tools
	Red	Sexy, love, romance, vigor, optimism, strength, caution	Clothing, cars, traffic signs
	Yellow	Visibility, hazard, quality	Mailboxes, telephone booths, reference guides
	Blue	Sky, fidelity, serenity, truth, reliability, responsibility, emotion	Art, uniforms
	Green	Nature, fertility, confidence, jealousy, inexperienced	Surgical uniforms, ecological symbols, mold
	Orange	Visibility, cheap, loud	Warning signs, life rafts
	Brown	Masculinity, earth	Wood, animal fur
	Purple	Nobility, luxury, power, vanity	Royal colors
	Pink	Delicate, flirtation, femininity, sensitivity, soothing	Girls' clothing, baby clothing, makeup
	Gold	Mysticism, luxury, wealth, excessive	Coins, jewelry
England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland	Red	Power, authority, government, visibility, temper	Mailboxes, red hair, buses, telephone booths
	Yellow	Visibility, rubber	Rain jackets
	Blue	Tranquil, dignity, decorum	Scottish war paint, formal clothing
	Green	Environment, Catholicism, quality	Four-leaf clover, leprechauns
	Brown	Earth, honesty, manual labor	Soil

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	Gold	Royalty	Colors of the royal crown
	Purple	Royalty	Colors of the royal crown
	Black	Mourning, death, dignity	Clothing, taxis
	White	Leisure, sports, peace	Sportswear, linen, lace
	Gray	Sophistication, elegance, traditional, tasteful, strength	Concrete, clothing, industrial town
	Orange	Protestant religion	Irish flag color
France	Red	Blood, passionate love, lust, virile	Lipstick, clothing
	Yellow	Summer, joy	Fruit, mailboxes
	Blue	Water, reliability, trust	Street signs, jewelry
	Green	Outdoors	Park benches, rooftops
	Gold	Decoration, light, luxury	Champagne, Paris is known as the City of Light
	Orange	Earth	Pottery, figurines
Germany, Austria and Switzerland	White	Nature	Snow, mountains
	Blue	Reliability, neutrality, romance	Blue Danube waltz
	Yellow	Cowardice, persecution, sunshine	Yellow Stars of David during WWII
	Silver	Sophistication	Cars, shaving tools
	Green	Earth	Emeralds
	Blue	Ocean	n/a
	Gold	Money, wealth	Swiss bank accounts
	Brown	Earth	Soil, Swiss chocolate

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Scandinavia			
Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland	Blue	Water, clean, poor	Hospital supplies, out of money
	Green	Sterility	n/a
	Yellow	Heart, warmth	Mailboxes in Sweden
	Orange	Heart, warmth	Sun
	White	Evil repellant, peace, nature	Ice, glaciers
	Red	Strength	Eric the Red, father of Leif Ericson , first European on North American continent
Netherlands	Red	Nature, government, royalty	Mailboxes, tulips, colors of the royal crown
	Green	Ecology	Greenpeace movement headquartered in Netherlands
	Brown	Architecture	Wooden shoes, bricks, windmills
	Yellow	Food	Cheese, butter
Spain and Portugal	Black	Power, death, piety	Bulls, Catholic faith
	Yellow	Treason	Condemned prisoners during Inquisition
	Green	Racy, sexy, cheap, agriculture	Off-color humor, vineyards
	Orange	Blood, aggression	Scarves, flamenco dresses, bull-fighting
	Gray	Strength	Rock of Gibraltar
Italy	Red	Light, fidelity	Italian flag, restaurant decorations
	Blue	Mourning, judgmental, heaven, purity	n/a

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	Purple	Nobility, endurance of suffering	Martyrs' clothing
	Gold	Wealth, luxury, divinity, greed	Jewelry, church decorations, crosses
	Black	Humility, death, mourning	Venician gondolas
	Silver	Wealth, luxury, craftsmanship	Jewelry
	White	Virtue, purity	Clothing
	Brown	Earth, penitence, humility	Leather goods, religious clothing
Eastern Europe			
Greece	Red	Love, Autumn	Wine, flowers
	Yellow	Spring	n/a
	Green	Water, earth, divinity, wisdom	n/a
	Purple	Nobility	n/a
	Black	Winter	n/a
Commonwealth of Independent States			
Georgia, Armenia, Azerbizian, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Krygtan, Kazakhstan, Russian	Red	Communism, revolution, beauty	Red Square, Metro station signs, Russian word for "beautiful" sounds same as English word for "red"
	Yellow	Nature	Sunflowers, Russian wedding color
	Gold	Aristocracy	Ukrainian coat of arms
	Blue	Hope, purity, peace, serenity	Virgin Mary
	Silver	Religion	Georgian art
Turkey	Blue	Healing, evil repellant, wealth	Ward off evil eye (amulets), art (frescoes)

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	Red	Fruit, Nature	Flowers, rugs, cherries, apricots, almonds, figs
	Purple	Nature	Flowers, stones
	White	Nature	Flowers, stones
	Gold	Nature	Flowers, stones
	Pink	Birds	Pink flamingos
Balkans and Slavic States			
Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Ukraine, Moldova, Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia	Red	Medicine	Flags of Lithuania and Latvia; red wool in Macedonia
	Blue	Art	Church frescoes
	White	Intelligence, neatness	Clothing, linen
	Gold	Fairytale	Latvian amber
	Green	Nature	Forests, pine trees
Middle East			
Israel	Red	Love, sacrifice, sin, blood, anger, hatred, strength	n/a
	Yellow	Saintly	halo of God
	Blue	the Lord; glory	colors of Israeli flag
	Purple	Sea; divinity	Shellfish
	Gold	Decoration	Jewelry

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	White	Nature, mercy, peace, purity joy, wisdom	Clothing, white hair
Egypt	Red	n/a	Mailboxes, rugs
	Yellow	Soul, sun, happiness, prosperity	Stones, bees
	Blue	Truth, justice, reproduction, virtue, faith	Stones, flowers
	Green	Fertility, vegetation	Stones, rugs
	Gold	Wealth	Jewelry
Africa	Red	Death, bloodshed;	Mourning clothing
	Green	Fertility	Trees
	White	Victory, purity	Young girls' clothing
	Yellow	High rank	Chiefs' clothing
	Black	Age, maturity, masculinity	Clothing
	Gold	Continuous life	Women's' clothing
	Brown	Earth	Soil, pottery
Asia Pacific			
China, Hong Kong, Taiwan	Red	Communism, celebration, government, fire, summer, good luck, joy, fertility, good fortune	Wedding dresses, lucky money envelopes, red ink used in obituaries
	Yellow	Earth, power, royalty, sun, masculinity, happiness	Sun, Ying
	Blue	Sky, water	Clothing
	Green	Desirability, spring, youth, birth	Crops, jade jewelry
	Orange	Love, happiness, humility, good health, immortality	Robes of Buddhist monks, fire
	Gold	Preciousness, prestige, wealth, status, decoration	Jewelry, gold lettering on red background signifies

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			ultimate prosperity
	Black	Water, life, stability, the unknown	Clothing, paint
	White	Death, mourning, pure, neutral, west, autumn	Funeral clothing, flowers, packages
Singapore and Malaysia	Red	Healing	Red hibiscus flowers
	Yellow	Royalty, authority	Taxicab roofs
	Green	Affiliation with Islam	Green twig placed on rear of car on road indicates car is disabled
	Orange	Official	Public coin phones
	Black	Mourning	Funeral clothing
	White	Respect	White chrysanthemums used in ceremonial pilgrimages
Thailand	Gold	Architecture	Temple decoration
	Red	Buddhism	Buddhist robes
	Yellow	Nirvana	Sash around Buddha statues
South Korea	Red	Good luck, blood	Festive clothing
	Yellow	Joy, happiness	Engagement
	Blue	Mourning	Clothing
	Gold	Decoration	Jewelry
	Black	Darkness, mystery, mourning, water	Clothing
Indonesia	Red	Anger, celebration	Wedding dress
	Blue	Sadness	Clothing
	Gold	Decoration	Jewelry
	Brown	Earth	Soil

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Japan	Red	Blood, passion, self-sacrifice, strength	Public phones, paint, cherries
	Yellow	Sunshine, nature	Flowers, clothing, gardening
	Blue	n/a	Clothing
	Green	n/a	Clothing
	Orange	Love, happiness	Clothing
	Purple	Royalty	Flowers
	Pink	Spring, femininity, youth, good health	Lingerie, flowers, clothing, off-color humor
	Brown	Earth, strength, durability	Wood
	Gold	Decoration, wealth, prestige	Jewelry
	Silver	Masculinity, high-tech, strength, precision	Tools, weapons
	Black	Non-being, night, unknown, mystery, anger	Electronics, clothing
	White	Death, mourning	Cars
India	Red	Birth, fertility	Wedding dress, bindi, henna color in hair
	Yellow	Sun, commerce	Taxis, tumeric spice
	Blue	Heavens, love, truth, mercy	Krishna's skin
	Green	Nature	Plants, crops
	Pink	Happiness, hope	Ganesh birthday celebration powder
	Orange	Death, rebellion+C72	Hindu monks' robes, death shroud of married woman
	Black	Laziness, anger, intolerance	Alcohol, Sudra (untouchable caste)

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	White	Creation, rebirth, light, serenity, reincarnation	Brahman (highest caste), food, dairy products
Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines	Tan	Earth	Desert, bamboo
	White	Ocean	Coral (Great Barrier Reef)
	Orange	Animals	Fish
	Yellow	Resurrection, rebirth	Easter
	Red	Sun	Sunset, scarves, soil
	Blue	Water	Ocean, flags
	Green	Craftsmanship	Handicrafts, nature
	Brown	Earth	Soil
	Black	n/a	n/a

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The way different cultures see and describe the meaning of color varies dramatically around the world. For instance, the Bassa people in Liberia only have two words for classifying colors (ziza for red/orange/yellow and hui for green/blue/purple), while the Inuit reportedly have 17 different words for white alone, which are modified by different snow conditions. Hereâ€™s a more in-depth look at what different colors mean and the symbolism of colors across the globe. Blue. Blue metal mailbox on a brick wall in Monteriggioni, Tuscany, Italy de Mario Savoia.