

APPLYING THE COLOR CODE PERSONALITY PROFILE TO SLOVAKIAN MARKETING AND BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study applied the Hartman Color Code Personality Profile to marketing and business students in the Slovak Republic, Central Europe. Developed by Taylor Hartman in 1987, the Color Code instrument explains human motivation by identifying four primary motives -- power, intimacy, peace, and fun -- using four labels to represent these motives: Red, Blue, White, and Yellow, respectively. During a presentation at the 2003 Marketing Educators' Association annual conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, the researchers became interested in applying the instrument to a global audience. How will the Color Code pertain to students and professionals in other countries? Marketing and business educators could possibly use the Color Code when working overseas or when working locally with a diverse population. The paper presents an overview of the Color Code personality profile, findings from the study, and implications for marketing educators.

INTRODUCTION

The Hartman Color Code Personality Profile (Hartman, 1998) measures the primary motive of an individual, rather than the behavior of an individual. The advantage of the prime motivational approach is that it allows educators and managers to better understand a person's psyche from a different perspective than those measured by traditional inventory measurement tools that focus on behavior modalities. Indeed, no two individuals perform the same task for exactly the same reason; however, individuals with similar motives may behave alike and may be motivated by similar objectives, circumstances, and rewards. The underlying basis of the Hartman Color Code Personality Profile then is to easily identify, understand, and apply motive based theory in order to motivate, resolve conflict, and even predict the performance of an individual or group¹. Hartman defines and explains primary motive by applying four colors: (a) Red, (b) Blue, (c) White, and (d) Yellow.

Results

T-tests were used for the initial analysis on three independent variables: gender (male x female), management level (middle x upper), and education (high school x university). There were only statistically significant mean differences between male and female business professionals on Red and Blue personalities: Red personality $T = 2.30$, $p \leq .05$ and Blue personality $T = 2.92$, $p \leq .05$. Management level and education were not significant.

The researchers were interested in how the Color Code would pertain to business and marketing professionals in other countries. The researchers chose Slovakia to begin looking at the effectiveness of using such a tool for helping business managers and marketing educators in Central Europe work with their employees and students. The data suggests that for the most part, there are some differences in Slovaks when compared to the U.S.

The only statistical differences identified were a greater proportion of Red personality males than Red personality females, and a greater proportion of Blue personality females than Blue personality males. Even in the U.S. today, it is typically seen as a masculine characteristic to be power driven -- a Red personality trait, and it is typically seen as a female characteristic to be nurturing - or a Blue personality trait. Is this innate, or is it indeed a societal difference? Perhaps if the researchers could have applied the Color Code to the U.S. population 40 years ago, they would ascertain results similar to Central Europe. For example, they might find fewer women in management and fewer fathers involved in raising or disciplining children.

To this end, business educators, managers, and trainers could use the Color Code when working overseas or when working locally with a diverse population. Using the Color Code, educators would better understand the primary motives and increase their teaching effectiveness by realizing that student differences may have more to do with innate primary motive than with culture, race, economic status, language, society, or religious differences. The number of students studying abroad has grown to over 1.6 million with more than a third of these students (582,996) studying in the United States (Open Doors 2002: International Students in the U.S., 2002). The better understanding educators have about prime motive, the greater the educators' ability to communicate with expatriate students and create successful learning activities. Hartman (1998) reported the U.S. population is comprised of personalities of approximately 24 percent Red, 35 percent Blue, 20 percent White, and 20 percent Yellow, and suggests that these percentages might be consistent worldwide.

Based on this exploratory study, future research should look at multiple countries and different schools, yielding larger samples. Follow-up studies on educators adopting the Color Code would generate interesting longitudinal comparative data. If these differences are indeed based on variations in primary motive that business students or educators can easily measure, understand, and use, then this knowledge becomes an invaluable tool as users transcend the cultural, economic, and societal boundaries that allow people to limit their effectiveness in many walks of life.