

DOCUMENTING THE RICHNESS OF INDONESIA THROUGH THE CULTURAL COLOR OF SUMATERA'S TRADITIONAL TEXTILE AND CULINARY PRODUCT

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of cultural color was an approach to a better understanding color from cultural stand point, unlike the others color studies which looked at the psychological aspect of color. Johannes Itten's theory of color served as a thinking base in this study. The theory was reflected in the cultures of Indonesia and represented by island of Sumatera (Aceh Darussalam, Medan, Padang, Bengkulu, Palembang, and Lampung). The scope of the subject matters was limited to traditional textile products such as traditional costumes, bridal apparel, and culinary. The textile products were chosen because they became reflection of a culture whose place was close to society and this color became the its own identity. The research method was qualitative that consisted of doing literature study, interviewing experts (historians and artists), and visiting cultural centers especially the ones associated with textile and culinary product. The result of this study is presented in the form of morphological matrix on cultural color. The matrix of analysis is supported with arguments and a classroom experiment, which allows students to use, cultivate, and maximize the method of applying color in visual communication to achieve harmony and contrast.

Keywords: *cultural analysis, cultural color, morphological matrix, traditional textile, culinary product, Sumatera Island.*

INTRODUCTION

Visual Communication Design (VCD) education is a rising celebrity, especially in Jakarta. Most formal educational institutions, as well as vocational ones, offer VCD study. As we know, the formal institution in Indonesia struggles to compete against foreign institutions. To stay in the competition, a strong and distinctive feature is needed. Therefore, the local content or wisdom can be a 'weapon of choice'. True to formal VCD roots, color theory is selected as the research subject. The fact, color is part of our daily life and the ability to perceive color is the basis of much of the activities in creating and applying signs worldwide. Analysis of cultural association on colors is an approach to know the culture's colors. Unlike the previous studies, which focus on its psychological aspect, this study aims to provide insight on local colors based on cultural aspect. It is a continuance of previous research conducted on Java (Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Semarang, and Surabaya). This study focuses on Sumatera island that represented by big cities, such as Aceh Darussalam, Medan, Padang, Bengkulu, Palembang, and Lampung. They possess certain characteristics, which will be a unique point to explore. The scope of the subject matters will be limited to textile products (traditional costumes and fabrics) and original cuisine. The textile products are a reflection of the culture that is close to society, where its colors have own value identity. "We are What We Eat" is a slogan tie to culinary and a mirror of cultural actors themselves. The color theory by expert Johannes Itten is the thinking base of this study. Itten's theory is selected because it is the classic foundation for the study of color in visual communication design developed by Bauhaus which is the basic of modern art and design teaching.

Color pervades all forms of visual communication. A single color or palette of colors has the power to contain symbolic meaning, evoke an emotion or mood, deliver a message, or simply attract attention (Woolman, 2009). Color as a visual tool takes part in the conveying message and creating meaning without using words that speak and be a media for a communication problem solving. Red ink writing perceives quickly as a universal expression of rage, but color can also describe things, for example, the blue color of the sky in the certain area. Blue sky in Jakarta looks more grayish than in coastal and inland areas. Color can also be used without reference to objects that are observed to connect the human being to a more abstract or symbolic meaning. In Jakarta, the purple color family is nicknamed *janda* (widow), and no one knows for certain the reason behind its association with the widow. This possibly because widow *dangdut* singer often wears it or they are considered seductive which then associated with widows. Color can convey mood, feeling, and create atmosphere. Connotative colors have specific symbolic value according to culture. In Indonesia, yellow has a cultural connotation as cowardice, but in China as the kingdom (Darmaprawira, 2002).

There are several ways in grouping colors, such as from psychology, environment, etc. This study is based on culture, for several reasons, because the lack of color research focusing on cultural aspects, lack of Indonesia government's attention to its heritage, and lack of youths knowledge about the strengths of their culture. Moreover, this research closely explains local color codification, including the meaning of the colors in its application to art objects. Color possesses a meaning as society's identity which can tell the philosophy, character, pattern of life, norm, and culture. The study objective is to find colors identity of Sumatera based on textile and culinary that can be applied in the various branch of designs.

The color is affected by geographic, social and cultural contexts, human psychology, as well as personal preferences (Woolman, 2009). Many studies on color have been conducted by its experts throughout time. Color study on Ovahero tribe in Southwest Africa that has been conducted by Hugo Magnus (German ophthalmologist) differentiates color naming from color perception. A primitive society like Ovahero tribe often creates color naming based on surrounding objects, such as colors on livestock. The Ovahero does not prioritize the existence of color perception (Leeuwen, 2011). This makes color naming in society to be different with others. The existence of a special colored object is not similar. Harold Conklin's study on Philippine's Hanuhoo tribe explains the naming which comes from its specific words to describe two certain conditions on an object. *Latuy* (wet and fresh) describes green color on newly cut bamboo and *Rara* (dry and refine) for red brownish on dry out and mature bamboo (Leeuwen, 2011). This shows that colors can be classified based on a different context.

Swiss artist, Johannes Itten, has constructed a theory based on Isaac Newton and other color theories. Itten has developed Concept of Color Cords and modified color wheel later applied to the computer system. This theory does not only speak about color contrast but also its emotional effect. The theory was created when he taught in art school, "School of Applied Arts" Bauhaus, Weimar – Germany, then the artists and designer continue to refer and use his theory until today (Moriaka, 2006). Itten explains color formally, not just its psychological aspect, but also the effect that resulted from a color when juxtaposed with other. Seven groups of contrast designed to coordinate hues, with includes the variation of intensity (contrast can be obtained through light and dark value). Itten was the first person who realized that not all skin tone matches with the same color, which can raise difficulties in fashion. He categorized skin tones into four types, then connected with four seasons to create a group of Seasonal Colors (spring, summer, autumn, and winter). The distinction in here is that Itten lived in four seasons country, compare to Indonesia's two seasons.

Indonesia local color study has been conducted by Yusuf Affendi and quoted by Sulasmi Darmaprawira on book "Warna: Teori dan Kreativitas Penggunanya" (Color: Theory and User Creativity). It explains the structure of Indonesia local colors, such as colors of Java (Yogyakarta, Solo, Pekalongan, Cirebon), Minangkabau, and Bali societies. Another study on local color has been conducted by Ganal Rudiyanto that presented his dissertation (2011) on Ulos weaving Batak Toba. It

talks about the colors on this traditional textiles related to the believe system of its ancient society. The main colors are divided into three categories, upper (white = god), middle (red and brown = human) and lower (black = devil) worlds. Each world believed to posses certain the sacred powers.

Digital technology is inseparable with today's daily life, including in visual communication design. Camera and computer bring efficiency in working process and preservation of design works, although the base of design studies is still unchanged, so it is important to master it to become a designer. Colors as one of the media and design element are quite important not only in providing aesthetic value and balance but also delivering messages both denotatively or connotatively. In the search of communication with colors, the most important part is how we conceptualize the right color language itself compared with other languages we understood. In language theories, understanding is implied in how we talk, hear, or read. Color amplifies our way of understanding the world.

Color can be understood formally and psychologically. Each specific color with its properties (value, intensity, and temperature) has a different association and emotional effect, resulting in different effects for the viewers. The providing contrast in value produces a certain effect and objective. White in Europe means happiness and celebrations while in China means death or grief. Among the different culture, some basic colors in different time have an opposite meaning (Feisner, 2000). The eye naturally recognizes contrast and color, especially the colors of the rainbow spectrum (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet). The perception of colors requires deeper thinking to recognize. Human being is capable of seeing the whole possible color, then color's perception evoked by the dominant of wave spectral light. It is the reason why the eye almost always attracted by something that is easier to see (Adams, et al., 2006). The purpose of the color data collections and their application is to be introduced to the typical food and beverages small and medium enterprises so that they can increase the value local content through packaging.

METHODS

Classroom research uses qualitative methods of deduction, which is based on Johannes Itten's theory (used as teaching material on Color Theory classes). Next, researchers take a closer look at the relationship between Itten's theory and the application of color in six big cities in Sumatera, especially in cultural matters. Several stages performed are: (1) Object's Formal study, the phenomenon of color as viewed from Johannes Itten's color model. The steps in doing this are literature study, taxonomy (morphology), and analysis of morphology creation process. (2) Object's Material study, the spectrum colors in Java that observed through Itten's color model. The material objects are the observation in Sumatera's colors, classroom or studio experiments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research process starts with literature study on the subject of the Sumatera Island and on color theory, specifically Itten's. Next step is capturing images about the Sumatera Island, specifically the textile (fabrics and traditional clothing). Hundreds of photographs are taken from visit this island, especially its traditional markets, museums, and events (such as wedding ceremony and exhibitions), as well as from literature (doctoral dissertation and books) and websites, which then divided into groups according to the cities. Interviewing experts, such as textile makers, cultural observers, and elders also conduct while visiting Sumatera Island. Other interviews also conduct in Jakarta to get more data from academic peers. From the city groups then it is divided once more according to which color is shown in it, such as red, orange, black, brown groups, etc. These color groups are divided into

two groups, the one that appeared frequently and the one that appeared seldom. One or two photographs are selected to serve as visual data from each member of the frequently appeared color groups. The visual data of each region's cultures are compiled to individual compositions, which are the base for creating the color schemes. The schemes are constructed from colors that dominantly appear in the composition, which then are presented in CMYK. CMYK is the standard color code that is used in printing, the classic and widely use the medium in visual communication design.

Aceh is dominated by indigenous culture and law of Islamic Syariah. Before the Islamic period, the culture was influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism while the hinterland area was heavily influenced by animism and dynamism. The main colors of Aceh consist of gold, black, chili red, yellow, and orange. The supporting ones are dark red, dark green, light green, and dark purple red. They dominate Aceh traditional textile (*songket*). While the color of the culinary items are not as bright as the textile, which perhaps because they derive from natural dyes and use in rituals. The bright colors might be influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism from India and China, which are rich in color. This area was frequently traversed by merchants from India and China, the two countries that influenced the color of textiles and culinary. The color scheme of Aceh can be seen in Figure 1.

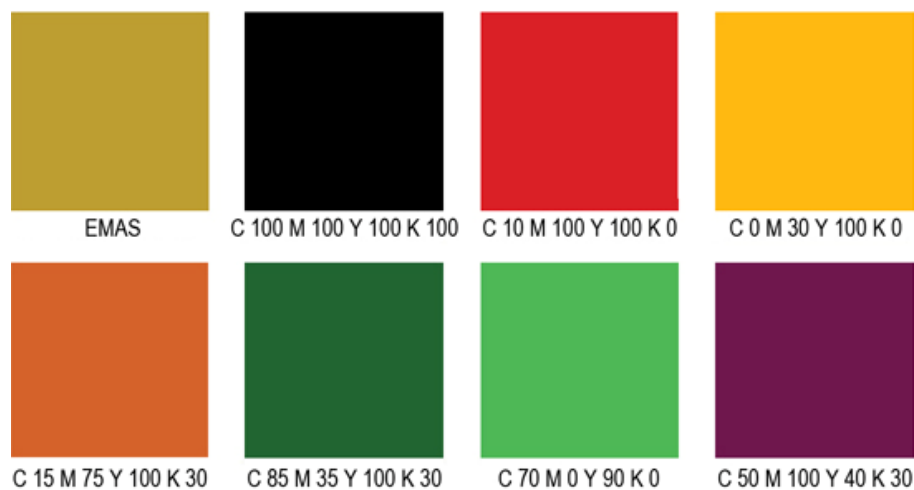


Figure 1 Aceh Darussalam Cultural Color Scheme

Medan's scheme is represented by its biggest tribe, Batak (Tapanuli). The traditional staple textile of Batak tribe is *Ulos* weaving. *Ulos* plays an important part in the life of the Batak society until today, from being work of art to being the symbol of culture. The weaving process produces symbols via pattern and color, not just limited to aesthetics but also contains norms and traditional guidelines of life. Through innovation and modification, *Ulos* becomes more popular and wearable daily, not just for ceremonial purposes (Rudiyanto, 2001).

The main colors are black, brown reddish, and white, which are recognized as *Tolu Bolit*. Other colors often appear in textiles, and culinary are yellow, orange, green, and blue. *Ulos* traditional textile is believed having powers to protect the body and heavily dominated by the main colors. These colors have own meanings in Batak. White means chastity and honesty, red means heroism and bravery, black means sorrow, while yellow means wealthy and fertility. They also understand as religious symbols. Black as the low world of the devil, red and brown colors are the middle world where human and nature live in, and white as an azure world of gods. The color schemes of Batak can be seen in Figure 2.

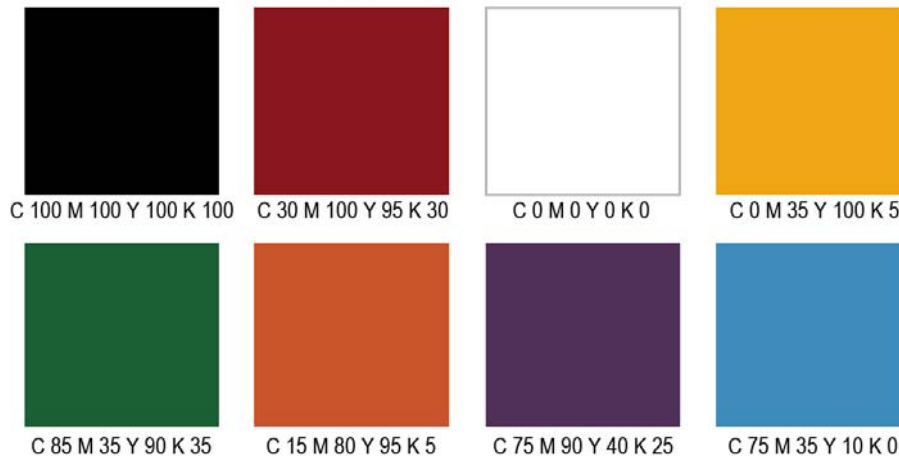


Figure 2 Medan Cultural Color Scheme

Minangkabau society represents Padang. The dominated colors are bright colors, such as red, gold, green, reddish yellow, black, maroon, reddish dark purple, and turquoise. They can be seen in most of the textile, in the wedding gown, and traditional costumes. Bright red commonly found in textile that represents the braveness and spirit of its community. Minangkabau’s culinary is full of red and taste spicy also resonates the braveness. Black is used in men’s clothing to convey leadership, by old proverb, *hitam tahan apo, putih tahan sasah* (black stands wrought, white stands wipe). The green presents peacefulness of community’s harmonious life. While the bluish on turquoise explains the manner of behavior that respects their culture. The color schemes of Minangkabau’s culture can be seen in Figure 3.

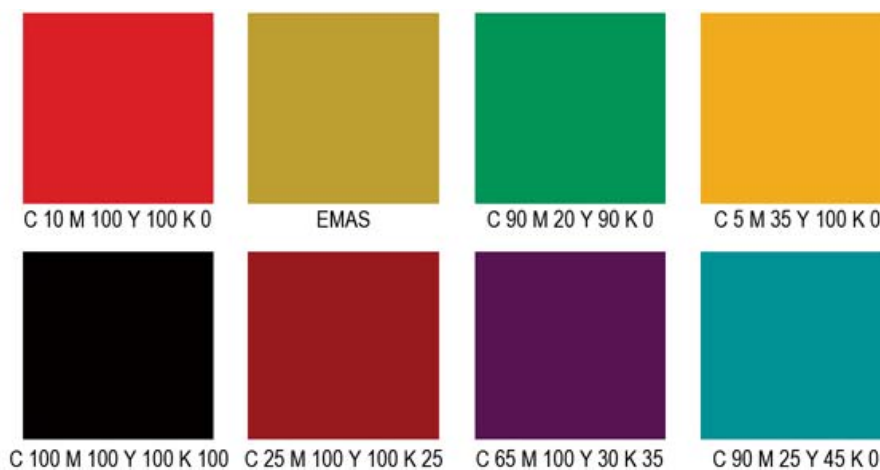


Figure 3 Padang (Minangkabau) Cultural Color Scheme

Bengkulu’s textile is *batik Basurek* with strong colors. Originally the fabric was made from wood fibers and lantung roots, then with the development of technology and community’s mindset, they made it become *batik* (Dinata, 2010). Before Islam was brought to Bengkulu, the dominant colors of *basurek* are black, blue, red, brown, yellow, and yellowish. Black or blue *basurek* are used for the dead and stretcher. Red, maroon, brown, yellow, and yellowish are used in the cultural ceremony such as the wedding. *Basurek*’s colors tend to be strong but not striking. Blue symbolizes natural color, such as ocean and sky that indicates of the universe. Compare to Aceh and Padang’s bright and

striking colors, and Bengkulu's tend to be dull. Based on Itten's seven contrast, the color combination of *basurek* dominated by contrast colors, so it can be categorized as contrast hue. In the seasonal color chart, they can be found in autumn and summer category, which is similar to the weather and season in Indonesia. Bengkulu's cultural color schemes can be seen in Figure 4.

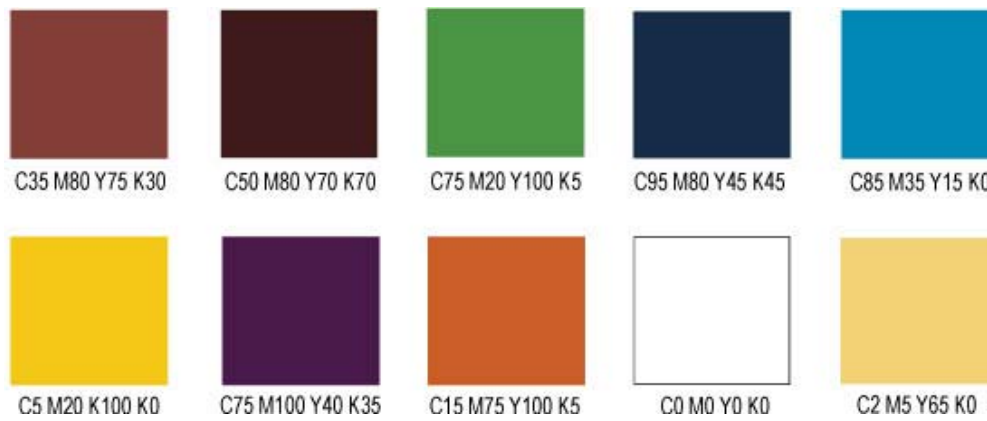


Figure 4 Bengkulu Cultural Color Scheme

The most famous traditional textile of Palembang is *Songket Palembang*. *Songket* gets influence from China (Tiongkok), and that is why it generally uses bright colors which show cheerfulness and joyfulness of South Sumatera society. It is mostly decorated with gold threads, and there is the even *songket* with gold as the base. That is why the prime color of *songket* is gold, then dark red followed by blue (indigo), yellow, green, orange, and purple. Gold and dark red symbolize the golden era of Sriwijaya Kingdom and the influence of China in the past time. Just like in Bengkulu's, Palembang's scheme shows strong color but tends to be more vivid with higher contrast. Palembang's cultural color schemes can be seen in Figure 5.

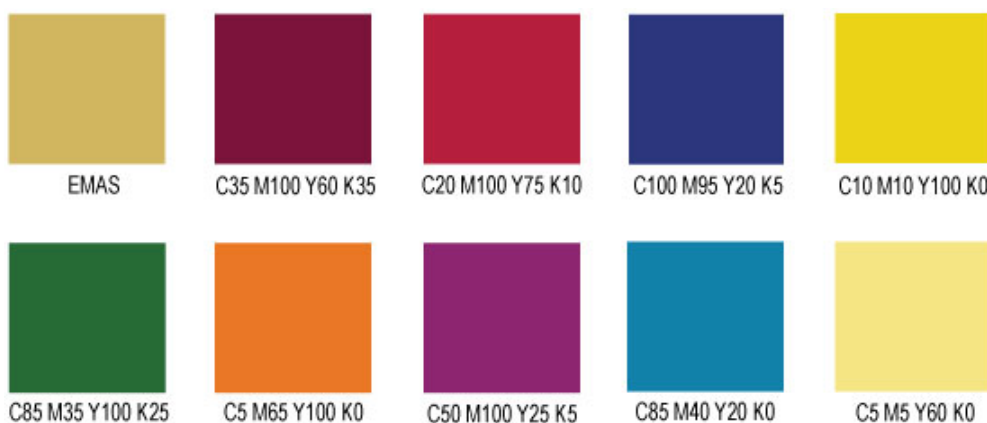


Figure 5 Palembang's Cultural Color Scheme

Tapis is well known as Lampung traditional textile. It is made with weaving and technique with extremely beautiful embroidered gold thread. This kind of textile is normally used in traditional ceremonies (wedding). Colors in Lampung's textile and food use a lot of gold (honor), white (sanctity), yellow (splendor), red (bravely). *Tapis* has strong bright colors and uses a lot of white. Lampung's cultural color schemes can be seen in Figure 6.

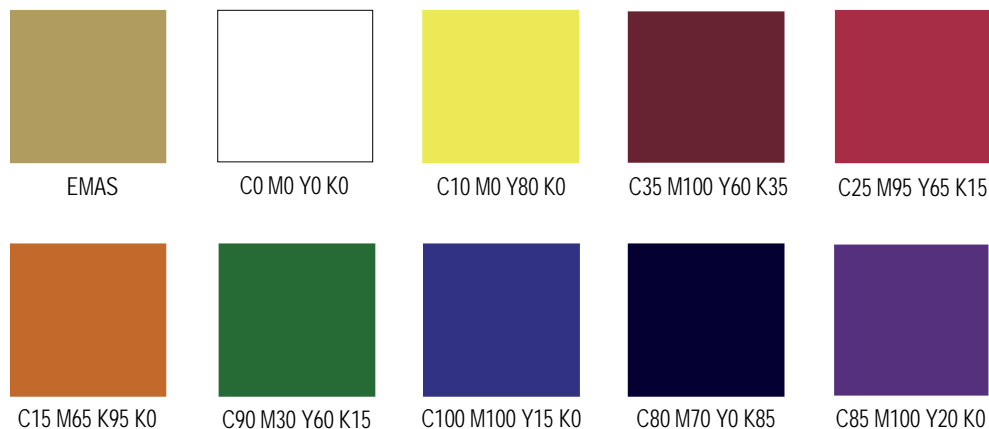


Figure 6 Lampung's Cultural Color Scheme

Comparing the color schemes of the six cities, it turns out that the colors can be divided into two groups according to their intensity. The first one has strong bright otherwise known as vivid colors, accompanied by gold color, consist of Aceh, Padang, Bengkulu, and Lampung. The second one consists of duller color that belongs to Medan and Bengkulu. Table 1 and 2 show the matrix of color schemes each city in Sumatera Island.

Tabel 1 Matrix of Aceh, Medan, and Padang Color Schemes

ACEH	MEDAN	PADANG
Gold (special color)	Black C100 M100 Y100 K100	Red C10 M100 Y100 K0
Black C100 M100 Y100 K100	Red Brown C30 M100 Y95 K30	Gold (special color)
Chili Red C10 M100 Y100 K0	White	Green C90 M20 Y90 K0
Yellow Orange C0 M30 Y100 K0	Yellow Orange C0 M35 Y100 K5	Yellow Orange C5 M35 Y100 K0
Dark Red C15 M75 Y100 K30	Dark Green C85 M35 Y90 K5	Black C100 M100 Y100 K100
Dark Green C85 M75 Y100 K30	Orange Brown C15 M80 Y95 K5	Maroon C25 M100 Y100 K25
Light Green C70 M0 Y90 K0	Purple C75 M90 Y40 K25	Dark Purple Red C65 M100 Y30 K35
Dark Purple Red C50 M100 Y40 K30	Light Blue C75 M35 Y10 K0	Tarquiose C90 M25 Y45 K0

Table 2 Bengkulu, Palembang, and Lampung Color Schemes

BENGKULU	PALEMBANG	LAMPUNG
Maroon C35 M80 Y70 K70	Gold (special color)	Gold (special color)
Dark Brown C50 M80 Y70 K70	Dark Red C35 M100 Y60 K35	White
Green C75 M20 Y100 K5	Red C20 M100 Y75 K10	Yellow C10 M0 Y80 K0
Dark Blue C95 M80 Y45 K45	Indigo Blue C100 M95 Y20 K5	Dark Brown C35 M100 Y60 K35
Light Blue C85 M35 Y15 K0	Yellow C10 M10 Y100 K0	Red C25 M95 Y65 K15
Yellow C5 M20 Y100 K0	Green C85 M35 Y100 K25	Orange Brown C15 M65 Y95 K0
Purple C75 M100 Y40 K35	Orange C5 M65 Y100 K0	Green C90 M30 Y60 K15
Orange Brown C15 M75 Y100 K5	Purple C50 M100 Y25 K5	Dark Blue C100 M100 Y15 K0
White	Light Blue C85 M40 Y20 K0	Black C80 M70 Y0 K85
Cream C5 M15 Y65 K0	Cream C5 M5 Y60 K0	Purple Blue C85 M100 Y20 K0

The color is essentially a personal matter, and it changes to place and over time. This makes it all the more important for us, who will carry our conceptions of color into the future in trying and

becoming more sensitive to the voices of a wider range of colors (Kuno, 1999). Besides that, according to Yu (2014), color is the fundamental building block of visual symbols and it serves as a means of communication. After the color schemes were established, next it will come the classroom experimentations. The class members select several foods and beverage packaging's that considered having interesting design and consist of at least five colors. The class members then make a list of the colors used, starting from the most to the least appeared while at the same time also carefully observed the relation between each color to its surrounding, whether they are highly contrasted or perhaps harmonious one. The original colors from these packaging then replace using the colors from the six cities schemes. The students are instructed to completely replace the original colors in packaging. The goal is to make a composition by experimenting with the scheme to maintain the pre-existing relationship between colors. To compose in color means to juxtapose two or more colors in such a way that they jointly produce a distinctive and indistinctive expression (Van Hagen, 1970). The examples of the snack packaging that will become students' experiment can be seen in Figure 7.



Figure 7 Original Packagings

The students do recolor packaging with various color based on each city's cultural color schemes in Sumatera Island. Figure 8, 9, 10, and 11 use vivid intensity color scheme that represent the color scheme of Aceh, Padang, Lampung, and Palembang.



Figure 8 Applying Aceh Scheme



Figure 9 Applying Padang Scheme



Figure 10 Applying Lampung Scheme



Figure 11 Applying Palembang Scheme

While Figure 12 and 13 use duller intensity color scheme in recoloring the packaging. The duller intensity color represent Bengkulu and Medan.

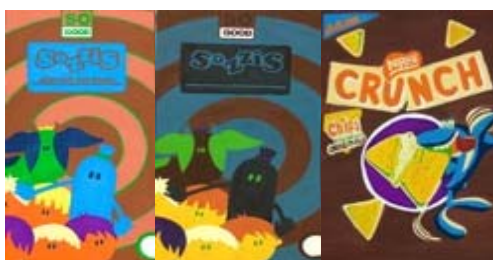


Figure 12 Applying Bengkulu Scheme



Figure 13 Applying Medan Scheme

The application and implementation of Sumatera colors in packaging that done as a class project, so that the students get lesson about; (1) the local colors that based on food and textile traditional are not always can be combined and used directly in food and beverage packaging, (2) the color combination of more than five colors must consider many aspects like the percentage of domination color and the color saturation level that is used. Sumatera colors (Aceh, Medan, Palembang, Padang, Lampung, Bengkulu) are general with brightly colored with alloy gold cannot be used for local packaging food and beverage. Some of Sumatera colors commonly are found in poison or dangerous things package, such as black, gray, blue, and dark blue. While gold is rarely used for local food and beverage except import chocolate, cake, and cookies packaging, such as Toblerone, Kiss, Cocoa Colony Chocolate, Concierge, etc. The gold is commonly used in packaging for fashion and beauty. Making the color of gold also requires special technique and cost.

CONCLUSIONS

Sumatera cultural color scheme can be divided into two groups. First, the strong and bright (vivid) with the gold combination, which belongs to Aceh, Medan, Padang, Bengkulu, Palembang, and Lampung. The second belongs to Medan and Bengkulu. Medan scheme tends to be darker, consistent with the community's belief in nature powers and myth. Together with Bengkulu, which appears duller than others. Gold is absent in the second group.

In Itten's color wheel, cultural colors of Aceh, Padang, Palembang, and Bengkulu sit on the primary and secondary spot. While for Medan and Bengkulu, the colors can be found in the color tones of primary and secondary. In Itten's seven contrast theory, the combination of the cities shows the contrast of hue. Also in the seasonal color scheme, on general the colors can be belong to the category of autumn and summer palettes.

Knowing the color scheme of each region in Indonesia, particularly Sumatera can enrich students experience in the color application on visual communication media not limited to just packaging, ranging from the logo, and company profile to publications. For the wider community of color users (architects, interior designers, fashion, painters), these color schemes can be a module for a base palette to create an atmosphere or a mood of an object. For the interior designer, the color scheme can help creating an atmosphere in certain areas or room as desired so that local content can be featured. For the general public, the scheme is not just a new knowledge but also a form of loving this country. So the sense of pride as part of the country can help the preservation of the nation's culture

and identity. The implementation of local color schemes should be arranged and adjusted back to its purpose and function color are used.

Sufficient knowledge of culture through the implementation of an appropriate Debian should be understood and owned by the color users in efforts to build an image of local content through visual communications media. So, it makes the users do not only enjoy the work of there choice but also proud of the richness of its culture. This study is expected to be continued to another part of Indonesia. So, we can have the colors characteristic of each culture in Indonesia.

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