

Color Coordination as a Powerful Design Tool

Ariana Gjoni

Integrated Design, University for Business and Technology, UBT, Prishtina, Kosovo

Email: ariana.gjoni@ubt-uni.net

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Abstract

Color is one of the first elements to communicate the message behind a design. This study is about the design and color coordination of creating customer-centric products, and aims to understand the approach of Kosovo designers to color selection. Research has shown that color coordination is a key factor in design that affects the final effect of a product. The choice of color palette and color coordination is very important and should not be ignored, as color remains a powerful tool in design. Kosovo designers have shown also that selecting the color palette is a difficult process and references to color theory, schemes, and meaning of colors are very important for a better match of colors with the design. In-depth and authentic research is essential to a successful palette choice, so the design stands on a very strong and fulfilling point. These findings and the recommendations from this research are important for further success in the field of design, creative industry, architecture, business, entrepreneurship, teaching, etc.

Keywords

Color, Palette, Design, Coordination

1. Introduction

The importance of color design stems from the significance of color to the human mind (Jones, 2014). Whether it's the natural beauty of a blue skyline as it fades into a perfectly pink sunset or the attention-grabbing man-made colors of a red stop sign, there's no denying that color plays an important role in the world we live in (Cox, 2017). Our relationship with colors is very special and we will not react the same way to the same color. It depends on what reaction it gives us and also what coordination it has in the design.

Colors influence on a few different levels. On one hand, we are conditioned socially and culturally, and on the other hand, our reaction is also personal, influenced by how color is presented in our lives.

Surrounding ourselves with “right” colors can affect us by changing moods and emotions and also taking on cultural and personal meanings. There are few things in design that are more subjective—or more important—than the use of color (Chapman, 2021).

A color that can trigger a reaction in one person can trigger the opposite reaction in another, due to culture, prior companionship, or personal preference. Also, a change of hue or fullness of color can cause a completely different feeling, however cultural differences can compensate for those effects, with a nuance that is happy and uplifting in one country, and depressing in the other. Research reveals that people make a subconscious judgment about a product within 90 seconds of seeing it, and between 62% and 90% of that assessment is based on color alone (Morton, 2019).

Whatever the design, picking the right color is a priority. It is the color that grabs attention as colors have different individual associations. The designer’s challenge is to balance these complex roles that color plays in order to produce an effective design (Hughes, 2019).

The research is Kosovo-based. Kosovo is a recently independent country that unfortunately has left us behind with the development of the state, economy, following trends and keeping up with frequent changes happening in the world in design. So, it was quite an attractive topic to explore, the impact of the factors mentioned above, on our local designers and their color palettes.

In this research, a semi-structured interview approach was used to explore the process and method of color selection and color coordination by designers. A total of 11 designers from different design areas were interviewed. Semi-structured questions are more flexible and may include more extensive valuable information. This approach was chosen to gather a deep understanding from the designers, about the method of color selection. To understand the individual process, a one-on-one electronic interview form was chosen.

2. Literature Review

To use colors beautifully you must feel them, fall a bit in love with them like that genius, Henri Matisse, a lifelong student of color theory. And he said a certain blue enters your soul. A certain red has an effect on your blood pressure. A certain color tones you up (Innes & Innes, 2003).

According to “Decoding Matisse’s Color”, he tended to work in pairs of color complements: blue/orange, red/green, yellow/violet. Seldom does one color take a back seat in the painting; even if it is used sparingly, the surrounding colors tend to promote each other (Locke & Henri, 2022).

According to Matisse, colors never fade, only their values are shifted by adding white or blue. As an artist he is to be especially admired because he throughout his creativity continued to look for new ways to create, while maintaining color was his main focus (Locke & Henri, 2022).

The elements and principles of design are not a perception to create a perfect

piece of visual communication, yet knowing and understanding these tools give the possibility of knowing about a host of options and possibilities that might otherwise have been hidden (Lovett, 2019).

Fine artists, graphic artists, web and game designers, architects, landscape designers, town planners, florists, fashion designers, song writers, industrial designers—the list goes on and on and all of them are competing over who will offer the most desired products. All designers are trying to determine the factors that influence a product to be the most sought after.

We interact with the world around us with visual stimuli and when we are involved in creating objects, we need to understand the effect it creates on viewers. Color theory is a science and art in itself, on which some build entire careers, as color consultants or sometimes brand advisors (Chapman, 2021). Recognizing the effects that color has on most people is an invaluable expertise that designers can possess and offer to their clients. Scientists estimate that humans can distinguish up to 10 million colors (Mukamal, 2017).

All colors came from light. Every color we see is the result of certain wavelengths of light being absorbed or reflected (Krause, 2015). When light hits an object, the object reflects part of it and absorbs the rest of it. Some objects reflect certain wavelengths of light more than others and that is why we see certain colors.

Although many studies of design process and theory have been developed and presented, in reality designers rarely follow the standard rules for their creations and color coordination. A design process is more a form of personal self-expression. The manner or type of approach that designers use in their design work depends on their preferences, experience and education. The color palette will be determined through research, but how your color is applied and positioned and accent colors need experimentation and research.

The task of arranging a selection of these colors satisfactorily may seem a bit daunting if there were not a number of helpful instructions. The right color palette encourages people to behave in ways designers want them to, while the wrong palette can turn visitors away before they take any action at all (Chapman, 2021). The color selection process requires thoughtful consideration and trend analysis. They may just be the perfect inspiration for the next big idea.

Designing with Colors

Color is a crucial factor in any design or artwork and something that the designer uses or works with on a daily basis. Whether designing a logo of a brand or a message of a company, it is integral to good design. Colors create emotions and help us understand the world around us. The art of color is important especially for designers, stylists and all those who hope to gain the attention of their audience with their creations.

Although color is one of the most powerful elements, we have available, there are many conflicting color theories regarding the color wheel structure. Some of the ideas we often encounter are expressed in the works of artists based on the

teachings of Johannes Itten from Bauhaus 1920.

His book, *The Art of Color*, is still the clearest and most logical guide to color theory (Lovett, 2019). The color theorists in the world examine two different approaches to understanding the art of color by showing us that color reproductions enable the clarification of subjective feelings and objective principles. But what exactly is a color palette for artists?

Color wheel is this: “a time-tested and painter-approved schematic that artists can not only refer to when formulating a singular color but also when coming up with attractive pairs and sets of colors” (Krause, 2015). Knowing the effects that color has on design is an expertise that is extremely valuable that designers can possess for their creations.

- Designer/Architect John Pawson is known for its monochromatic and minimalist buildings. His work may appear to be somewhat monochrome, neutral, in different shades of beige and gray, due to its minimalist style and traditional Japanese. He saw a lot of color and described his design as masses united in light. The truth is that it is impossible to talk about any architecture—including his own—without talking about color (Pawson, 2017). According to John Pawson, as soon as we have light, we have color. When we understand this, we can start to really understand an architectural space or colors and see it in a variety of conditions of light, which means experiencing the full range of the spectrum of colors.
- Paul Smith. For people who may not know him, Paul is a famous British fashion designer. His relation with art started pretty early, when he was 11 years old, his father bought him his first camera, a Kodak one, with 36 Exposures, so he had to spend them very carefully. “So, you really had to think about the picture, and I think I just trained my eyes to look and see. If you train your mind like that, you’ll find things anywhere” (Arts, 2018). And from that we can understand the awareness he had on the importance of color, even before getting involved in the fashion industry. Since that, little has changed, in his designs the impact of color is very detectable, colors bring the surprise, help work with staff defining the trend, season and message that is going to be delivered. Color can be so influential on design. It’s one of the most flexible elements in the fashion industry. Millions of dollars change hands each year predicting and discovering what the following year’s color trends will be (Lovett, 2019). All this affects many aspects of our lives, ranging from the clothing industry, interior design, architecture, cars, electronics, etc. So, every product has to be right if we want to be successful. A color palette that may be acceptable for one era may be old-fashioned in another. After a few years this will probably change. So, even though colors interact in certain ways with each other, there is no correct separation or selection of colors.

3. Aim of Research

The study aims to understand how colors are selected in the design process by

Kosovo designers. It has also been important to understand the design considerations for colors, stages, and selection methods. This was achieved through interviewing independent designers throughout Kosovo.

The main goal of the research was to understand the importance, selection strategy, incorporation of trends, color connections with the designed product and general color analysis as a powerful design tool. The research was conducted through a semi-structured interview

3.1. Research Questions

- 1) How important do you think color is to design?
- 2) Do you use meaning and different color schemes in your designs and how?
- 3) How would you describe your color palette for the products? Do you have color selection strategies (if so, how?)
- 4) Do you rely on the trend during this selection and how do you incorporate it into the design?
- 5) Do you rely on market demands or refer to a personal palette?
- 6) At what design stage do you think about colors?
- 7) How do you explain the relationship of color to the designed product?
- 8) Do you think the color changes the design, and have you had such an occasion in your work?
- 9) Were you forced to depart from your preferences for colors and how did you act in this case?
- 10) A tip for future designers about color when designing?

3.2. Methodology of Research

The research is of qualitative type. This is a descriptive study, after the inductive procedure. Eleven interviews were conducted with designers from different areas of design who operate in Kosovo. Based on the nature and sensitivity of the research topic, the data are collected through an interview which consists of ten questions. The selection of correspondents represents an important criterion. Due to the study focus on collecting data about designers and their design process, the target participants were required to have design working experience and/or a design educational background (**Table 1**).

3.3. The Profile of Interviewed Designers

Table 1. The profile of interviewed designers.

Participants	Design Area	Brand or product line
I1	Fashion Design	Formal Office Garments, women
I2	Fashion Design	Women's wear brand, casual and special occasions garments
I3	Fashion Design	Women's wear brand, modern clothes
I4	Fashion Design	Women's wear brand, contemporary

Continued

I5	Graphic Design	Brand and Advertising Designs
I6	Graphic Design	Design Services for Real Estate Companies
I7	Graphic Design	Brand and website design services, design of brochures, catalogs, packaging.
I8	Graphic Design	Designing, creating, managing and maintaining various brands
I9	Architecture	Design services as hand-made & non-finished products
I10	Interior Design	Design and construction of architectural objects
I11	Interior Design	Design of interior spaces

4. First Interpreting

- The importance of the colors chosen in the design is a priority for success. Color is the reason for the first attraction, the first thing we notice and it is what is most remembered in a product. Depending on the different areas of design, color has a language that conveys powerful messages wherever it is used. Each color is associated with an emotion and will always be a designer's greatest ally. It is a key factor in the design which affects the final effect of the designed product.
- Color theory, a collection of rules and instructions and meaning of colors are the most important factors that designers from Kosovo consider during the design process. Using different color schemes makes the product more powerful. Depending on the type of product, the color should match the design, the events, the target customer and the message that the designer wants to convey through his client creations.
- Selecting the color palette is quite a difficult process. Situations and the use of colors can seldom be the same and this fact makes it quite challenging. It depends on the concept, the meaning of the colors and the previous experiences with different designs. Different modes and schemes are used depending on the field of design: seasonality, warm colors, colors from the same tone, warm and cool tones. The color palette is described as a way to communicate about the product.
- Color trends are generally followed by some Kosovar designers and are incorporated into the permanent design philosophy. Although on a small scale they are always present to refresh the palettes which are composed of cool or pale colors and sometimes do not stand out much. Also, because the color trends attract a lot of audiences. Another group of designers think that trends are transient and can only be incorporated when they are creating seasonal products that should be in trend over time.
- Kosovar designers usually refer to the color palette they have created for each design product or project and take into account market needs. They channel the market demands and orient them in the right direction in symbiosis of

colors that coexist well with each other, whether the nuances of the trend with the permanent ones. They're palettes are suitable for colors that incorporate market preferences and demand trends.

- Based on the answers from the interviewers, the colors are really important to them, so the color is mainly in the initial stage; for example, during the sketches, the concept and the part of the idea where the whole project is done by adapting to that color. But also, according to some of them, the phase of the color could change during the development and implementation of the project, in such cases where we do not have enough research or ideas the color could be in the last stage.
- Designers from Kosovo think that the color has a very important role in the connection of the designed product. Because once they make a connection, it gives the essence of design, character and emotional compatibility to attract attention, contrast and communicate with the product as well as with the customer.
- The color changes the design for better or worse. Color can be a defining factor in knowing a product. The color can change the design and lose its identity or even go beyond what was initially conceived but without losing the originality of the original idea.
- It is considered that the initial step is the proper presentation of the designer, together with his color palette, and in the impossibility of complete fit between the client and the designer, compromises are welcome even though sometimes it becomes completely a personalized design for the client in whom the color palette, unfortunately doesn't make an appearance. Such a match is inevitable as the design is the field which directly addresses the consumer.

5. Results—Final Interpreting

1) The importance of colors in design

The importance of the colors chosen in the design is a priority for success. Color is the reason for the first attraction, the first thing we notice and most remembered in a product. Each color is associated with an emotion and will always be a designer's greatest ally. It is a key factor in the design that affects the final effect of the designed product.

2) The use of color meanings and schemes in design

Color theory, a collection of rules and meaning of colors are the most important factors that designers from Kosovo consider in the design process. Using different color schemes makes the product more powerful. Depending on the type of product, the color should match the design, and the message that the designer wants to convey through his creations.

3) Selecting the color palette

Selecting the color palette is a difficult process. The situation and the use of colors can seldom be the same and this fact makes it quite challenging. It depends on the concept, the meaning of the colors and the previous experiences

with different designs. Different modes and schemes are used depending on the field of design: seasonality, warm colors, colors from the same tone, warm and cool tones.

4) Incorporation of the trends in the color palette

Color trends are generally followed by designers and incorporated into the permanent design philosophy. Although they always come in small ways to refresh a palette consisting of cool or light colors, sometimes they don't stand out too much. Color trends attract a large audience. Some of the designers do not follow and are not affected by the color trends, they said that trends are temporary and style is more important. Based on product trends, it can only be included when creating seasonal products that should change over time.

5) Market demands for colors

Designers from Kosovo often refer to the color palette they create for each product or project they design. Market demands are oriented in the right direction in a symbiosis of colors that coexists well with each other. Their palettes are suitable to incorporate trend colors and market preference-demand.

6) Color selection—design stage

In the design process, color decisions are generally made in the first phase; when a project is in the final stages, during sketches, concept discovery, or color coordination. And, without in-depth research, color choices may change during the development and implementation of a project.

7) The relationship between color and the product designed

Color plays a very important role in the connection of the designed product. Because once they create a connection, it gives an essence to the design, a character, and an emotional compatibility that attracts attention, contrasts and communicates with the product as well as with the customers.

8) Color change the design

According to this research, in the diversity of design, color changes the design, which has been proved by this research. This difference manifests itself in different contexts, taking into account the different nature of occupations.

At the same time, the impact of color is acknowledged, whether positive or negative, such as the harmonization with a skin tone, the tendency to simplify or complicate a design in the field of fashion design; interpretation of a concept and identity in the field of product design; the role in human emotions and their psychology through the surrounding environment in the field of interior.

The awareness of the power of color, and the risk of losing the concept and original purpose due to the enormous impact it has, is therefore understood in all descriptions of such cases.

6. Recommendations

- Color should be one of the first design considerations. Choosing the best colors in your design is the key to success. Color is a powerful tool to influence the final product, making it attractive and highly sought after.

- The theory, scheme and meaning of color are very important and designers should follow these principles in order to better match the color with the design and make the product as strong as possible.
- Designers should rely on concepts, color schemes, and previous experiences when selecting colors. It also seems to take into account the nature of the product.
- Color trends are inevitable and their incorporation into the design philosophy must be permanent. Incorporating color trends into a designer-selected palette refreshes the palette and makes the design attractive and timeless.
- The market demand for color must be considered and steered in the right direction. Creating a color palette that fits the needs and preferences of the combined market is a design priority.
- In-depth and authentic research is essential for successful color palette selection. In general, color decisions should be made in the early phases of the design process.
- The color and design of the product are closely related to each other. This connection gives a product designed character and communication capabilities.
- In the diversity of design, designers can change the design with the help of color. Differences in different design fields may appear in different contexts when the design domain is taken into account.
- The design process goes through several stages and we have to put in the necessary time, work and importance. To start from an idea, which develops wider in the concept, but always to be researched, in order to combine creativity with needs, the color palette with the colors of the trend, so our design stands at a very strong and fulfilling point.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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