

# A The Tendency of Craftsmen in Choosing the Characters of Their Products: Contemporary or Traditional

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## Abstract

The craftsmen desire to improve the quality of their products will give an impact on the increase of their income. For this reason, the craftsmen are driven to perform a variety of efforts. One of the efforts is to penetrate the market, that is to try to enter another market outside the usual market. This effort results its own consequence because each market has a different demand of visual quality. Some craftsmen fail to penetrate the market because they cannot fulfil the demand of the visual quality in that market. The failure is due to different visual perception of the craftsmen and the consumers. The craftsmen make products with minor changes because of the strength of their tradition. On the other hand, the market changes rapidly because of the demand of life style changes. An effort to reduce the gap needs to be done. One of the way is to determine the craftsmen perception on choosing their products, whether they are likely to choose products with contemporary or traditional characteristic. The choices of their products indicate their mindset and their perception on products. This research used visual questionnaire method and tested on five areas, i.e. Deli Serdang, North Sumatra; Bagan Batu, Riau; Plered, Purwakarta; Kiaracandong, Bandung and Paseh, Sumedang. There were around 15-30 respondents in each area. The data obtained were processed using Rasch model and the result showed that the choice of contemporary or traditional character is highly influenced by the lifestyle and the environment of the craftsmen. The results of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the development of design in the environment of SMEs.

**Keywords :** The market and its visual quality, the traditional and contemporary character, the craftsmen perception

## 1. Introduction

The diversity of Indonesian cultures is reflected in various forms, such as dances, dialects, languages and also artefacts. Beliefs, customs, lifestyles and wisdom of a tradition practiced in a society are reflected in the artefacts, dances or other forms of culture. Thus, the artefacts made by a society that still holds on to its tradition, are not only functional for daily needs but they are also made well and beautifully shaped [1]. The uniqueness and the beauty shown in the artefacts can only made by groups of craftsmen with skills inherited by their ancestors from one generation to the next generation. The process of transferring the skills is done gradually. In their childhood, the craftsmen helped their parents to make the basic material. When they grew up, they are able to make their own products independently. Not only technical skill (*utility*) that is passed on by the last generation, but also the local values and tradition. With good technical skill (*utility*), local values and tradition, the products are then made with good quality (*dolce*) [2]. There are symbols in the shape of the products, colours or carvings of the products.

Nowadays, people are interested in traditional products with their aesthetic value. Since the demand for the products increased, the craftsmen also increase their production to fulfil the demand of the market. When the demand for the products is getting higher, the number of craftsmen required to make the products also increased. To fulfil the great number of craftsmen required in this industry, the process of transferring the skills is done instantly. As a result, the technique and values that are supposed to be passed on gradually, cannot be fully transferred. Some of the important lessons to understand the process of making the products are not taught. Consequently, the understanding of the values of the products begins to fade away. We often find products that only has functional value (*utility*), but the quality of the products (*aesthetic*) are not really good.



Figure 1. Dolce & utility

The craft products have a wide spectrum of market from products sold in traditional markets to products sold in the art shops or galleries. Each market of the products has different spectrum of quality and this affects the price of the products. Products with good quality will be well-appreciated so that they can enter the market of art shops or galleries. On the other hand, products with lower quality will not be really well-appreciated and can only be sold in places like traditional markets.

The traditional crafts are products made by a group of people in an area that has a source of certain material. With the skills of people in the society, the material can be made into functional products or decoration. By making the products, these people can earn money to fulfil their daily needs. The skills in making the products are passed on from one generation to the next generation [3]. According to Shakhar Shaha, an expert of traditional artefacts from Bangladesh, stated that the emergence of cultural products (crafts) is usually driven by three things. They are geographical drives, religious drives and social drives [4]. All of these three drives are common in Eastern society (Asia), including in Indonesia. This is because the geographical and religious structure, and also the social life in Asian countries are quite similar. The assimilation and migration of human from one place to another have caused an exchange of craft products. It is difficult now to find out who actually designed the products for the first time. It has become a common traditional knowledge [5].

If we refer to the history, particularly in the era of kingdoms in Indonesia, in a kingdom there was a person who had great skills in processing a material and made a variety of products. That person was given a special task by the king to make products for the kingdom. This person with great skills was called *empu* [6]. In addition to making products, an *empu* also had followers or students that helped him to make the products. Together with his followers, he made various products for the kingdom, such as war equipment, products used for daily needs, products used for royal ceremonies and products made to worship God.

Looking at the recent products, we can see that they are quite similar to the products used in the kingdoms in the past. The only difference is that the products made now has lower quality than those made for the kingdoms. Some of the products can still be found now because some people still use them in their daily lives. The existence of the products is in line with the definition of tradition, i.e. something that is inherited/passed on from one generation to the next generation, accepted by the society so that it could last for a long time. The changes in traditional products is quite little. The products that we find now is similar to the products made 20-30 years ago. The changes is not really significant. It is only in the substitution of the supporting material or the size that is adjusted with the recent needs.

In its development, the crafts industry grew into several markets with specific qualification of skills. Naoto Suzuki (2007) divides the markets into four groups: (1). Traditional market, i.e., the market for the society in general, (2). Souvenirs market, i.e., the market that sells souvenirs for tourists, (3). Expatriate market, i.e., the market that sells traditional products to the high level of society, the expatriate, and (4). Export market, i.e. the market that sells products with certain qualification of standards made for export products [7]. Imam Buchori also classifies the crafts into four groups: (1). Crafts made for daily lives, (2). Crafts made for religious purpose, (3). Crafts made by artists or designers, and (4). Crafts with high values [8]. From the opinions of these two experts, it can be concluded that the type of the crafts and the character of the market matches from one to another, especially when it is seen from the quality of the products.

From the four classes of markets and the four groups of crafts, they can be divided again into two big groups: (1). Crafts that focuses on shapes and function. These crafts do not need new designs. They are crafts made for daily needs and for religious purposes, (2). Crafts that require new designs tailored to the needs of this era and demands good quality of workmanship from the craftsmen. This group can adapt well to the modern life [9].

Today's market demands rapid changes in the new designs. This condition demands the craftsmen to

adapt to the need of the market, especially in choosing the elements of the products (e.g. shapes and colours) so that the products can be accepted by the market. The demand of the craftsmen today is to prepare themselves in order to understand the products needed with the image that can also be accepted by the modern society.

It is very essential to know the character of the craftsmen that can adapt to the demand of the market. By knowing their character, we will know the images that they represent. Thus, it will be easy to determine the market that is suitable for selling the products of the craftsmen. In addition, the designer can also develop the products of the craftsmen by providing designs that are suitable to the skills of the craftsmen in understanding the elements of the shapes. To determine the characters of the craftsmen, a visual questionnaire is made. This visual questionnaire can identify the perceptions of the craftsmen, whether their perception is traditional or the opposite. This is then associated to the skills of the craftsmen in adapting to new designs.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Adaptation to new designs

In traditional craft products, the design process is done by craft master. The craftsmen today only imitate and create the replicas. On the other side, the need of the market now is the rapid provision of various products. Due to the economy growth and trend in the society, the market requires faster changes of designs. Both of these conditions demand the craftsmen to adjust themselves to the present market needs. This can be done by improving their skill in reading designs so that they are able to make new products from new designs [10].

### 2.2 Different perception between the craftsmen and the market

This difference in perception is caused by environmental factors in the society, which is the interaction of each member of the society to become a general agreement that is mutually agreed. This perception will always be based on the reference and the accumulation of understanding on the reference. Pierre Bourdieu calls this the 'habitus' [11]. When the information received by each member of the society is relatively the same, it will produce taste and perception that are relatively the same. Bandura's social learning theory states that the members of the society will imitate each other so that eventually they have the same agreement [12].

In the craftsmen environment, the daily routines in making the products and the culture that flourishes in the society will build certain structure of habits in each craftsmen. These habits interact each other and forms a general perception in certain fields. Each field has specific perception which is often different from the perception of designers or the market perception of the quality of the products. The craftsmen and designers often have different opinion in the perception of a product, whether the product is good or smooth enough or not. The uniqueness in each of these fields is called the craft knowledge [13].

Knowing the craft knowledge from each of these craftsmen has become a way to know the tendency of visual perception within a society. By knowing the tendency of the virtual perception, the development of the products in a field can be well-directed.

In his research, Deny Willy used a method called *in depth level of cognition at the early stage of idea generation*. He underlined that there was a cognition difference between the designers and the craftsmen which is implemented in a form of a product. The craftsmen focuses more on technical things, while the designers focuses more on the display of the products, where the products should be stored or what colour is suitable for the products. The tendency of the craftsmen that focuses more on technical things is highly related with their knowledge and daily routine (making the products) [14].

## 3. Method

To obtain the spectrum of the craftsmen perception, several steps is conducted (see diagram 1). The first step is to collect perceptive data from five groups of craftsmen, visual questionnaire method was used. Numeric data obtained. This data was then divided based on the Likert scale: 1 is for very bad and 5 for very good. The respondents were also asked to give information, such as age, education, experience and location of the field. This data was collected through lists of questions and interview. Then when the perceptive data obtained was ordinal data that must be changed into ratio data. The Rasch model was used to change the ordinal data into ratio data and process it. The ratio data obtained from the Rasch model was then processed using two operations, i.e. average and correlation. When the average operation is done to see the tendency of the craftsmen in choosing the image with traditional or modern character. The correlation operation is done is to see the dominant variable that affects the tendency of the craftsmen choice. Both of these operation use the Starview program version 5. Then we analyse the data that has been obtained.

The procedure of data collection and analysis is done through three steps below:

- (1). The respondents in each field were collected in one place. They were given the answer sheet in the form of Likert scale with vertical lines on the number lines provided. The images were also displayed on the screen. This way, the data can be obtained from the all the respondents in the same time.
- (2). The data obtained is perceptive data in the form of ordinal numbers (1 to 5) with different levels between

each respondents. This perceptive data was then synchronized and processed using Rasch model through Winstep program to make them equal.

(3). The averages from each traditional and modern character image were then taken from the equalization result of perceptive levels. The results were then compared. The Statview program version 5 was also used to process the data. Both average and perceptive data were processed using the correlation operation with the variables of education, age, experience and distance from the field to the center of the city.

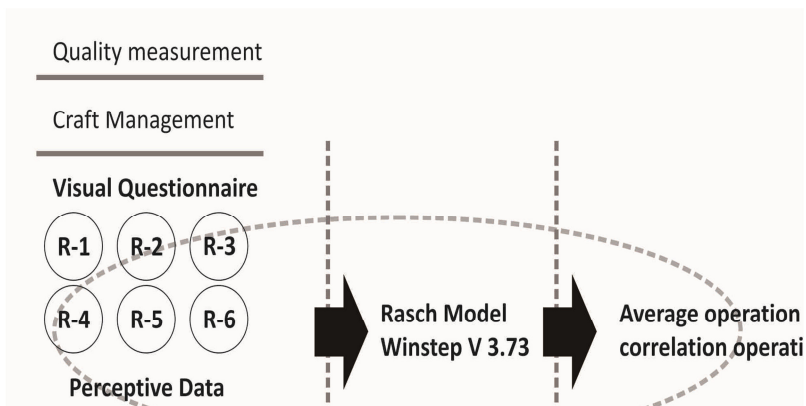


Diagram 1. The Scope of the Research

#### 4. Respondent

In this research, the visual questionnaire was tested on four groups of respondents from several fields. One group of the respondents was the first year students of Art and Design from Bandung Institute of Technology. These students become the representation of the market as they are not craftsmen and they also live in the city. It is assumed that they have the same taste with the people who live in the city.

The groups of craftsmen consist of 20 respondents from Kiaracandong, Bandung; 27 respondents from Deli Serdang, North Sumatra; 25 respondents from Baganbatu, Riau; and 19 respondents from Plered, Purwakarta. Fifty students from the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology is used as a comparison group. The fields are chosen with the assumption that they represents the character of each field in Indonesia in general (see figure 2)

The composition of the respondents can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Respondent

No	Field	Experience		Age		Education				Access to big cities	
		Low	High	Old (>40)	Young (<40)	SR/SD	SMP	SMA	PT	Far (km)	Near (km)
1	TPB			-	100%	-	-	-	100 %		0
2	Plered Ceramic	80%	20%	53%	47%%	26%	16%	58%	-	20	
3	Kircon Ceramic	37%	63%	75%	25%	12.5%	4.16%	50%	33.3%		0
4	Riau	88%	12&	36%	64%	16%	12%	28%	44%	80	
5	Medan	85%	15%	52%	48%	25%	18%	50%	7%		20

Generally, the age of the craftsmen from these different fields are varied. Some of them are young and some others are old. The old craftsmen have more experience but their education is relatively low. On the contrary, the young craftsmen have relatively higher education in comparison to the old craftsmen.

Several variables that differ each respondents are variables of age, education and location of craftsmen from big cities. All of these three variables refer to the hypothesis that difference of age, education and location are related to the habit of the craftsmen. The result of questionnaire analysis will be associated with each variable to see which one is more dominant and affect the craftsmen's choice.

The craftsmen from Deli Serdang, Medan are actually workers in an oil palm plantation. Producing crafts is only their side job. The location of the oil palm plantation is not very far from the city and the transportation to get there is also available. Thus, the way of living of the craftsmen is not very different from the people who live in the city.

Different from the craftsmen in Deli Serdang, the craftsmen in Baganbatu, Riau live in the area of the

oil palm plantation. The location of the plantation is far from the city (Riau). Even to get to the nearest village, they need 1,5 hours by using a vehicle. This is why these craftsmen rarely get references on new image. They are also too busy with their similar routines everyday.

The craftsmen from Kiaracondong live in the center of Bandung. These craftsmen have been making ceramic crafts since 1960s. The craftsmen there are now the third generation. In the beginning, there were many craftsmen in Kiaracondong. However, since there wasn't enough space for the workshops, some of them moved to other places (Cianjur, Nagreg, Bandung district). Although they have moved to another place, they still work as craftsmen. They live in the center of the city. Thus, it is easy for them to receive information about visual development. They can easily observe the lifestyle of the people in the city as they can see it everyday.

Plered is located between Bandung and Purwakarta but the location is off from the main road. That makes plered not a good spot for people to come especially after the Bandung-Jakarta toll roads operated. The amount of peoples come to plered are reduced . And it happen to the plered people,they dont spent much time to go out of town because they usually spend most of the time producing the routine proucts such as jugs, piggy banks, pendil, and decorative ceramics.

Others Respondents are 1st year ITB students; the respondents chosen with the asumption they come with educational backgorund as educated young people who live in the city . with their educational and living background we assumpt that They had new image information which enrich their visual vocabulary and it makes them as respondents that representation of the market in urban areas.

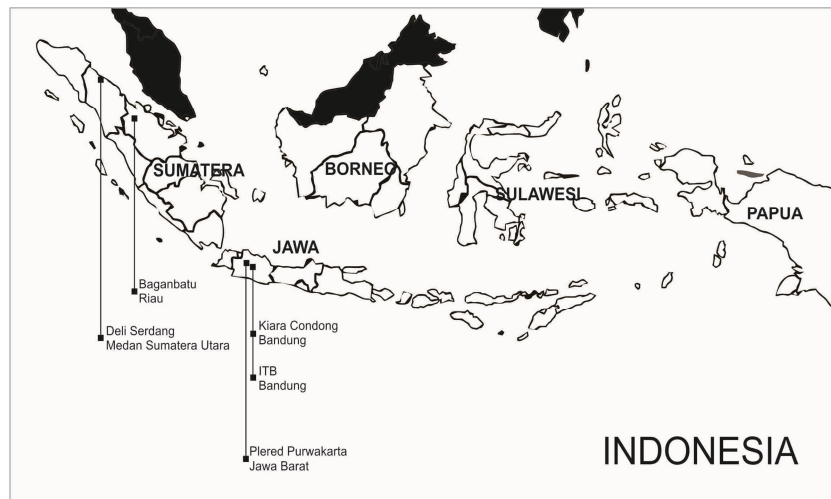


Figure 2. The location of data collection from the craftsmen

### 5. Sampling Instrument

Visual questionnaire is a series of test equipment to determine the position of craftsmen in the target market. The traditional and contemporary images, as seen from the visual elements, such as lines, shapes and colors, were arranged in this visual questionnaire.

The derivative character is an analysis which is standardized based on associative dictionary [15] and the opinions from experts, artists and designers. The result can be seen in the table below.

Table 2. Traditional and Modern

Traditional	Modern
Old	Futuristic
Old-fashioned	Trendy
Ancient	Current
Conventional	Fresh
Conservative	New
Obselete	Progress
Limited production	Sophisticated
Limited Production	Mass Production
Handmade	Manufacture
Manual	Technology

The keywords of the traditional and modern were then connected with the visual elements such as lines, shapes, colors, materials and workmanship or quality levels of refinement process. Explanation of these words can be seen in the following table (table 3).

Table 3. Keywords and explanation tendency of the elements that forms images of traditional and modern

Key word	Traditional	Modern
<b>Lines</b>	Tend to be curvy or wavy	Tend to be straight and sharp
<b>Shapes</b>	Tend to follow a curved line so that the shape formed was too curvy and different from the basic form Tend to be formal with twisted shapes like carvings	Tend to be simple and follow the the basic form.
<b>Colours</b>	Tend to have pale colours, brownish basic colour.	Tend to be bright, using basic colors with combination that makes it looks fresh
<b>Materials</b>	Tend to use natural materials with natural finishing.	Tend to use natural and imitation materials with finishing in colours.
<b>Quality</b>	Tend to miss its precision as it is made manually. Cenderung tidak presisi karena dikerjakan secara manual	Tend to have good precision as the role of the machine in making the products is quite dominant.

Furthermore, the description of the visual elements, researchers create visualizations into the product images with traditional and modern character (see figure 3).



Figure 3. Images with traditional and contemporary characters

The traditional and contemporary images were tested through the Image Character Study by several artists and designers. The results were 15 traditional images and 15 contemporary images that were arranged in the form of questionnaire randomly.



Figure 4. The images used in the visual questionnaire

## 6. Analysis and Discussion

The processing of the data obtained from the respondents was done gradually through several phases. In the first phase, the ordinal data were synchronized ordinal data using Rasch model through Winstep program. This equalization was performed in each field separately in order to see the tendency of choice in each field. One of the results that were obtained from the Winstep program at the early stage is the Alpha Cronbach value that indicates whether the data obtained from the respondents are good or not really good. After the data from each field was processed, the Alpha Cronbach value for each field was averagely good (above 0.7). The values for each field can be seen below (see figure 5) :

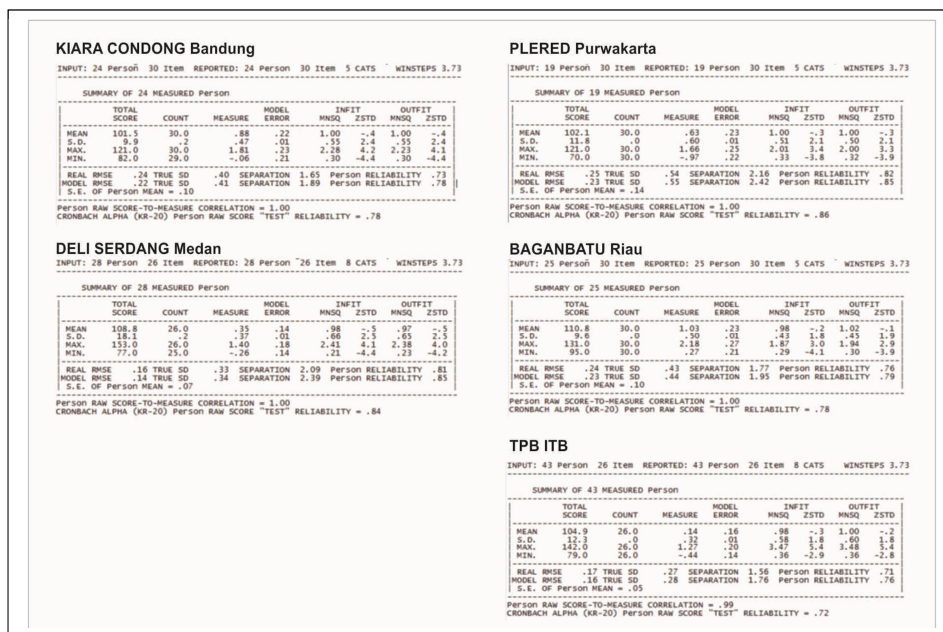
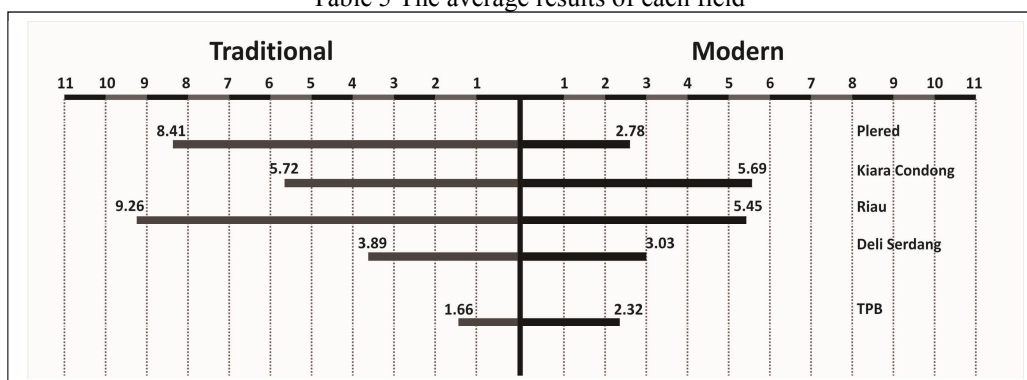


Figure 5. Instrument test results for each location of respondents  
 Table 4 The Alpha Cronbach Value

Group of Respondents	Alpha Cronbach Value
Plered	0,86
Riau	0,76
Deli Serdang (Medan)	0,84
Kiara Condong	0,78
TPB	0,78

At a later stage, the ordinal data was obtained. By using the Winstep program, it was then converted into the ratio data that is ready to be used in various important operations. One of the operation is the average operation to look at the tendency of choice in each field (traditional or modern) with an average operation. The average results from each image groups (traditional and modern) can be seen in the table below:

Table 5 The average results of each field



From the data of the average results, it can be seen that almost all the fields tend to choose the images with traditional character rather than the modern character. From the difference of choices between the craftsmen from Kiaracondong (0.03) and from the Deli Serdang (0.86), it can be seen that there was only a slight difference. On the contrary, the difference of choices between the craftsmen from Plered (5.63) and from Riau (3.81) was quite significant. Particularly for students of TPB, the comparison was a little different, they tend to choose modern character image, which is higher than the traditional image with a margin of 0.66.

The choices of the craftsmen that tend to go to the traditional image show that the social environment and the experience of the craftsmen range between those images. This has formed a perception among the craftsmen that good images of a product are images of traditional character.

Good images according to the craftsmen and those that are mostly chosen by them are:



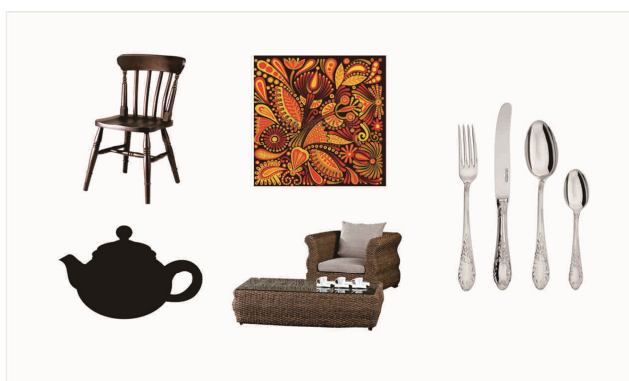


Figure 6. The images that were dominantly chosen by the craftsmen

From the images that were mostly chosen by the craftsmen, it can be seen that the colours were mostly brownish, the lines tend to be curvy or wavy and shapes were mostly formal. The third phase is to perform operation between the data obtained from the Statview program. The correlation operation is performed between the ratio data with the variables of age, education, experience, and the distance of the field with the center of the city. To see which variable is more dominant to encourage the craftsmen in choosing products with the traditional character.

Table 6 The P-Value in each field with the correlation between the variables of age, education and experience

Field	Age	Education	Experience
Plered, Purwakarta	0,2570	0,3482	< 0,0001
Bagan Batu, Riau	0,8154	0,0931	0,0101
Deli Serdang, North Sumatra	0,1060	<0,0001	0,4161
Kiaracandong, Bandung	0,0851	<0,0001	0,1149

The table above shows the value of the relationship between the field and the variables that are marked with P-value number. The P-value indicates that smaller value P-value (below 5% or 0.05) indicates the relationship between the choice of the field and shows the interconnection between the choice of the field with one of the variables.

When you look at more details on the average of the craftsmen in each field, it can be seen that the data that that was a high difference between the choice of traditional character with the modern character such as the fields in Plered, Baganbatu, Purwakarta and in Riau. On the other hand, there are fields with relatively slight differences, i.e., between the choice of a traditional character with modern character. They are the fields at Deli Serdang, North Sumatra and the field at Kiaracandong, Bandung.

As seen in the table above, there is essentially no relationship between age and the choice of craftsmen in a field. As explained the previous section, perception may be collective as long as the information received by each respondent is relatively the same. The table also shows that there is a relationship between the choice of the craftsmen with their education level. Craftsmen with lower level of education will tend to choose traditional character. On the contrary, craftsmen with higher education will tend to choose the modern character. In several fields, such as Riau, Baganbatu, there are some people who are well educated, but they tend to choose the traditional character. This is because the location of this field is far from the big city. Both to Medan or to Pekanbaru, the distance that must be taken is approximately 200 km. Thus, their level of education does not become a significant knowledge that helps them to make better choices. Their knowledge does not really improve because of their low or limited access on new information.

One dominant thing that can be seen clearly is the relationship between the choice of craftsmen with the location of the field. The farther the location of the field with the city, the more they tend to choose the traditional characters. On the contrary, the closer their distance to the city, the more they tend to choose the modern character. This is because the information from the city is relatively easy to be received. Both verbal and visual information, such as fashion, visual development, and progress can be directly obtained either through print or electronic media via the internet or television.

The development of information technology has shown great progress. Now the information can be more easily accessed through internet access using computers or smartphones. However, the use of such equipment, either a computer or a smartphone may be less effective due to the users' lack of knowledge in the use of technology as a source of information. This has also become an obstacle for the craftsmen because the information will not give a significant impact as long as they don't know how to take advantage from these technologies. Seeing this, we can see that there is a relationship between education and the craftsmen's choices. Therefore, education is related to the ability of the craftsmen to understand the benefits of technology.

## 7. Conclusion

The craftsmen who live far from the city will tend to choose images with traditional character because the information they obtained is limited compared to the craftsmen who live near the city. These craftsmen's choices are representations of their perceptions on good products. Suggested changes in the shape and and the development of new product designs should not be too extreme. Products with extreme changes will not be perceived well by the craftsmen, so that the result of the products made will not be optimum.

The craftsmen who live near the city and tend to choose images with modern character, will be more quickly to adapt to the current designs. They can easily find images with modern character as they often see new and modern designs in their daily lives.

Modern markets tend to demand modern visual character with good quality of workmanship and precision. One of the efforts to obtain information about the modern images is through education, both formal and informal education. Through education, the craftsmen will be able to utilize the available technology to get optimum results. Development of the market with the visual character of the market can be learned quickly if the craftsmen master the information technology and have the ability to digest the information.

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