

TEXTURE ANALYSIS OF A COATED SURFACE USING PIVOT-NORMALIZATION

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] The present application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/901,498, filed on November 8, 2013.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention generally relates to a method and apparatus that use a pivot-normalization to relate spectral reflectances or colorimetric information from spectrophotometric angles and/or incident light sources to identify the proper pigment(s) to match both the texture and/or gonioapparent effect(s) occurring within an unknown target coating.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The more elegant solutions require the user to submit a sample set of toners to a formulation engine, while the less elegant methods often select a predefined subset of toners to use. Neither of the approaches utilize a stepwise method and thus often result in non-optimal solutions. These methods have been typically burdensome for the users and lacked proper “intuition” to provide a streamlined method to a good solution for the user. Additionally, by the nature of this methodology, appropriate pigments necessary to match the sample can be excluded.

[0004] In order to provide a proper color match via formulation or search engines (or a visual process) it is ideal to determine the correct pigmentation of the sample. It is clearly sensible that utilizing the same pigments or appropriate offsets of those pigments to an original sample will allow a formulation or search process to arrive at an apparent optimum solution. It is equally clear that excluding those pigments, either deliberately or inadvertently, from availability will result in a less than optimal color match.

[0005] Several formulation engines and methodologies attempt to encompass pigment selection and formulation via various algorithms simultaneously. Historically, pigment identification packages and formulation engines largely have taken a “brute” force, guess and check type of method to provide formulations and

pigment information to their users. The combinatorial approach, or brute force method, is a frequently used method in which nearly all available pigments are combined in all the various combinations available given an end number of pigments desired in the final match. The combinatorial approach may utilize the Kubelka-Munk equation or a derivative thereof to generate the various formulations. Although there have been some methods which restrict the usage of some pigments given certain conditions to optimize the engine's speed, the end result is these formula combinations are then validated against the sample and a selection (or a single) of formulas most nearly matching the sample are provided to the user. There are various forms of Delta E's or other colorimetric assessment algorithms used to determine the accuracy of the match compared to the sample.

[0006] The more elegant solutions require the user to submit a sample set of toners to a formulation engine, while the less elegant methods often select a predefined subset of toners to use. Neither of the approaches utilize a stepwise method and thus often result in non-optimal solutions. These methods have been typically burdensome for the users and lacked proper "intuition" to provide a streamlined method to a good solution for the user. Additionally, by the nature of this methodology, appropriate pigments necessary to match the sample can be excluded.

[0007] In a standard portable spectrophotometer, the incident light is generally set at an angle of forty-five (45) degrees from normal. The resulting spectral reflectances that can be gathered are generally in the same plane as the incident light and are on either side of the specular angle (equal and opposite angle to the incident light) as well as nearer to the incident light source itself.

[0008] New portable spectrophotometric devices offer a vast multitude of angular color response (spectral reflectance) data. Besides the addition of several new angles, including azimuthal, or out-of-plane, angles, many instruments also offer additional light sources with different geometries from standard. By way of example, the incident light source of a second illuminator may be located at fifteen (15) degrees from normal. The plurality of combinations of incident light and angular response can be both too little and too much information to be handled at one time generating an enormous amount of spectrophotometric data. There is however a lack of methods to efficiently handle and analyze all of these data in a purposeful way. On the other hand also the new spectrophotometric devices capture only a part of the spectral response of the analyzed sample for selected illumination conditions.

[0009] Strategies have been recently developed using painted or virtual samples representing various textures and comparing those to unknown samples. These techniques require substantial user intervention and are significantly subjective which produces inconsistent results dependent upon the skill of the individual.

[0010] A simplified approach using limited multiangle, multiplaner when available, spectral data with or without a camera, color or otherwise, that can produce improved and simplified results for pigment characterization and sample properties is preferable for speed and ease of use. Providing a simplified system which can accurately determine the pigmentation of a sample to be fed to a formulation engine or visual color matching process greatly improves speed and accuracy. Including the formulation engine in that same flexible system further improves performance, accuracy, and simplicity.

[0011] Thus, a need exists for systems and methods that may be used to efficiently evaluate all of the data and specific combinations of data from a spectrophotometer allowing in particular meaningful inferences regarding the texture and/or gonioapparent effect(s) of an analyzed unknown target coating. There is also a need for systems and methods in which the individual angular spectral reflectance and colorimetric (e.g. XYZ, $L^*a^*b^*$, $L^*C^*h^*$, etc.) responses are handled as both independent entities as well as entities dependent upon the other responses (whether all responses or specifically selected responses) received from the device. Therefore the present invention aims to provide means which enable a formulation engine or select pigments for a visual matching process which have the identical or nearly identical properties (in the case offsets are required such as in automotive refinish applications) of available pigments.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] In a first aspect, the present invention provides a computer implemented method. The method includes obtaining, using a processor, reflectance data from a target coating and calculating from the obtained reflectance data, using the processor, pivot-normalized reflectance data. The method also includes generating based on the pivot-normalized reflectance data, using the processor, a coating pigmentation that is the same or substantially similar in appearance to the target coating.

[0013] In another aspect, the present invention is directed to a system. The system includes a database and a processor in communication with the database. The processor is programmed to obtain reflectance data from a target coating, calculate pivot-normalized reflectance data from the obtained reflectance data, and generate based on the pivot-normalized reflectance data a coating pigmentation that is the same or substantially similar in appearance to the target coating.

[0014] In another aspect, the present invention provides an apparatus. The apparatus includes means for obtaining reflectance data from a target coating and means for calculating pivot-normalized reflectance data from the obtained reflectance data. The apparatus also includes means for identifying based on the pivot-normalized reflectance data the pigmentation of a coating that is the same or substantially similar in appearance to the target coating.

[0015] In a further aspect, the present invention provides a non-transitory computer readable medium including software for causing a processor to: obtain reflectance data from a target coating; calculate pivot-normalized reflectance data from the obtained reflectance data; and generate based on the pivot-normalized reflectance data a coating pigmentation that is the same or substantially similar in appearance to the target coating.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] FIG. 1 illustrates a process that calculates a pigmentation for a target complex coating making use of the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 2 illustrates an example of raw (non-normalized) spectral reflectance data from an industry-standard six angles (-15° , 15° , 25° , 45° , 75° and 110°) with respect to the specular reflection.

[0018] FIG. 3 illustrates an example of a “standard” normalization result of the data shown in FIG. 2.

[0019] FIG. 4 illustrates an example of various pivot-normalized curves of the data shown in FIG. 2 overlaying each other.

[0020] FIG. 5 illustrates an example of the use of pivot-normalized reflectance data where the mean and standard deviation have been calculated across the first array of associated information and graphed against one another.

[0021] FIG. 6 illustrates an example of the use of a pivot-normalized data set using a specific set of angles to predict whether a target coating will contain a gonioapparent effect.

[0022] FIG. 7 illustrates a system which may be used to identify physical property attributes, such as reflective characteristics under different or identical lighting conditions which are visually and/or spectrophotometrically unique or distinguishable from one pigment to another, of a coating mixture of a target sample according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0023] While the description herein generally refers to paint or coating, it should be understood that the devices, systems and methods apply to other types of coatings, including stain and industrial coatings. The described embodiments of the invention should not be considered as limiting. A method consistent with the present invention may be practiced in a variety of fields such as the matching and/or coordination of apparel and fashion products. The present invention may be used with or incorporated in a computer system that may be a standalone unit or include one or more remote terminals or devices in communication with a central computer via a network such as, for example, the Internet or an intranet. As such, the computer or "processor" and related components described herein may be a portion of a local computer system or a remote computer or an on-line system or combinations thereof. The database and software described herein may be stored in computer internal memory or in a non-transitory computer readable medium.

[0024] The present invention is directed generally to spectral analysis of coatings, and more particularly, but not by way of limitation, to devices, methods and systems for predicting and formulating a complex coating mixture containing metallic, pearlescent, and/or special effect pigments.

[0025] The present invention generally relates to a method, system and apparatus for identifying physical property attributes (such attributes include, for example, reflective characteristics under different or identical lighting conditions which are visually and/or spectrophotometrically unique or distinguishable from one pigment to another) of cured complex coating (e.g., paint) mixtures using pivot-normalization data that are calculated, using a processor, based on the spectral reflectance measured e.g. by a spectrophotometer.

Additionally or alternatively, pivot-normalization data are calculated based on colorimetric response from a spectrophotometer.

[0026] The purpose of using pivot-normalization methodology is multi-fold. First, in order to use all available angles within a given system, pivot-normalization may be used to create an alternate bi-directional reflectance distribution function (“BRDF”)-type analysis. This type of analysis does not exclude any angles, but uses all angles to create a hemispherical “map” or “fingerprint” of a particular coating, texture or pigment type, whether gonioapparent or not. Second, pivot-normalization may be used to evaluate only specific combinations of angles in order to achieve purposeful manipulations. Similarly, this includes the specific exclusion or inclusion of specific singular angles or combinations of angles when a particular texture or effect is being sought after as included or not included in a target coating. Third, pivot-normalization may be used to accommodate for and correct the potential assumption that the received spectral reflectance values are incorrect in some way. Some potential reasons for irregularity or abnormality of the spectral reflectance data, even if minor, may include incident light angle location, incident light fluctuation, aperture size, target coating surface non-uniformity, etc.

[0027] FIG. 1 illustrates a process that calculates a pigment for a target complex coating making use of the present invention. At step 10, data is gathered from, for example, a spectrophotometer. The systems and methods of the present invention may be employed in several ways. For example, the systems and methods may be used on raw data, for example spectral reflectance data and/or colorimetric data (e.g., XYZ, $L^*a^*b^*$, $L^*C^*h^*$, etc.), and data that may have already been treated. The treated data may include, but are not limited to, multi-dimensional geometric data, vector data, unmodified or modified specular spectral reflectance data, etc. The data that undergoes pivot-normalization may have two or more identified, associated arrays based on the functionality of the original data. Herein, associated array means a classification of the primarily obtained values (here: reflectances) according to a variable parameter, such as an array of information (or multiple arrays) related to the coating. For example, spectral reflectance data may be considered to have arrays comprised of angle and wavelength. Another example includes colorimetric data as a function of angle and reference type (i.e., L^* , a^* , or b^*). In situations where more than two arrays exist, various sets of two may be tested independently, or the various arrays may be condensed into only two arrays. In order to choose the optimal set of

arrays within a data set, testing may be required on several scenarios to both the variety of potential resulting pivot-normalized data sets and the optimum based on desired functionality of the algorithm, with respect to color, texture, pigmentation and all variations within complex mixtures.

[0028] FIG. 2 illustrates an example of raw spectral reflectance data from an industry-standard six angles. In a “standard” normalization situation, the goal of the process is to adjust differing scales of data from multiple data sets (i.e. different angles) to one common scale, thus creating a set of shifted or scaled data that allow for relational analysis and understanding between the original data sets. An example of a “standard” normalization result is illustrated in FIG. 3, based on the data of FIG.2. The goal of the pivot-normalization of the present invention is not to align differing scales to a common scale, but to cause further separation in order to gain improved insight as to similarities and differences between the original data sets and their associated arrays of information. FIG. 4 illustrates an example of various pivot-normalized curves overlaying each other, based on the data of FIG.2. As can be seen, there is a difference between the resultant information from a “standard” normalization method versus a pivot-normalized method. In FIG. 4 the resolution of the graph has been accounted for using an overlay method rather than aligning the y-axes of each curve.

[0029] At step 12 of FIG. 1, the data are sorted based on a secondary array of associated information. For example, if using raw spectral reflectance data with associated arrays of angle and wavelength, the data may be sorted by wavelength in order to create a commonality between the scales of the angles within the individual wavelengths. This is contrary to a “standard” normalization method, which sorts by angle in order to make a common alignment between the scales of the wavelengths within individual angles. By sorting by the secondary array first (e.g., the wavelength), the first array (e.g. the angles) become the “commonality.” Within each set of the secondary array, the pivot-normalization calculation at step 14 may take on a standard form. The normalization calculation typically is:

$$\frac{X-\mu}{\sigma} \quad \text{Equation (1)}$$

where X is the specific data set value, μ is the sample or population average of the data set values within the sorted secondary array, and σ is the sample or population

standard deviation of the data set values within the sorted secondary array. The user can determine what information is in which array and the tool will adjust.

[0030] Due to the fact that the standard deviation across the first array of data may be much smaller than that across the second array of data, the resultant pivot-normalized set of data may appear to not yield useful information. Thus, if the resolution of the inspection, analysis, graphing, etc. is poor, detailed features may be missed. Therefore, the resolution of the inspection, analysis, graphing, etc. may be optimized so as to ascertain the benefits of the analysis.

[0031] When using spectral reflectance data, the calculation may occur individually for the first array of data based on each secondary array of data. However, the output remains linked with the original two associated arrays. Statistics, such as for example mean, median, and sum may be used to create a singular array out of multi-array calculated pivot-normalized data. Furthermore, an individual specific array value or values may be compared between the pivot-normalized analyses. The value of such a situation is to focus on the particular array value or values of maximum or statistical significance, where a majority of color and/or texture information is visibly or numerically perceived.

[0032] At step 16 of FIG. 1, the calculated pivot-normalized values or statistics from the pivot-normalized data may further be empirically correlated to known characteristics in order to identify textures, primary flake types, or other appearance information in complex coating mixtures. To employ an empirical method, the pivot-normalized data is calculated for an empirical dataset. All desired statistical or mathematical conversions of the data into a single point may be employed, or the data may remain as functions of the first and second arrays of linked information. In various embodiments, the empirical data set is representative of the expected mixtures and colors that will need to be handled in everyday situations. The empirical data set may be used to create a predictive correlation: $y = f(x)$, where y represents the desired characteristic for identification or a qualitative question regarding the target coating, and $f(x)$ is some function of x 's, where x is one or multiple variables using the pivot-normalized calculated values or statistics from the pivot-normalized data from a specific set or multiple sets of associated arrays. The resulting function may be linear or non-linear as defined by the empirical data set.

[0033] FIG. 5 illustrates an example of the use of pivot-normalized reflectance data where the mean and standard deviation have been calculated across the first array

of associated information and graphed against one another. The resulting correlations show a high probability of the usage of a colored aluminum pigment only in specific situations, whereas the lack of usage of a colored aluminum pigment exemplifies a significantly different graphical display and therefore also associated probabilities.

[0034] FIG. 6 illustrates an example of the use of a pivot-normalized data set using a specific set of angles to predict whether a target coating will contain a gonioapparent effect. In this case, a calculated range value from the pivot-normalized data for the particular angles resulting in 0.5 or above indicates a higher likelihood of not containing a gonioapparent pigment, whereas a calculated range value closer to 0.2 or below has a higher likelihood of containing the gonioapparent pigment in question.

[0035] Once an empirical correlation has been determined, it may be used at step 18 of FIG. 1 to derive the predicted value for the target coating. This may be achieved by using the target coating's values for the x's (pivot-normalized data, etc.) and calculating the answer for y (the texture effect). While examples have been given herein for the content of a gonioapparent pigment, according to the present invention one may derive a result as specific as which gonioapparent pigment at which size flake of that pigment by iteratively choosing the most important single angles or combinations of angles for the pivot-normalization calculations and empirical correlations. The choice of angular comparisons and to what level they are combined may be used to create the best possible empirical correlation. Empirical correlations may also be improved by including other non-pivot-normalization information, for example singular angle colorimetric data.

[0036] The quality of the overall "map," or "fingerprint," approach and the quality of the empirical correlation approach may be dependent upon the quality of the input data. The quality of the input data may be dependent upon the quality of the instrumentation and the quality of the data set used to create a set of knowns for the overall map or the empirical correlation. While any quality of data from an instrument or an empirical data set will result in an answer, the answer may be improved with the use of a high quality instrument and a widely varied, high quality empirical data set.

[0037] The entire set of calculations described herein may be used in conjunction with a processor in order to facilitate the choice of specific associated

array combinations as well as accommodate the volume of calculations required in order to derive and then use an empirical correlation using pivot-normalized data.

[0038] FIG. 7 illustrates a system 90 which may be used to identify physical property attributes, such as reflective characteristics under different or identical lighting conditions which are visually and/or spectrophotometrically unique or distinguishable from one pigment to another, of a coating mixture of a target sample according to the present invention. A user 92 may utilize a user interface 94, such as a graphical user interface, to operate a spectrophotometer 96 to measure the properties of a target sample 98. The data from the spectrophotometer 96 may be transferred to a computer 100, such as a personal computer, a mobile device, or any type of processor. The computer 100 may be in communication, via a network 102, with a server 104. The network 102 may be any type of network, such as the Internet, a local area network, an intranet, or a wireless network. The server 104 is in communication with a database 106 that may store the data and information that is used by the methods of the present invention for comparison purposes. The database 106 may be utilized in, for example, a client server environment or in, for example, a web based environment such as a cloud computing environment. Various steps of the methods of the present invention may be performed by the computer 100 and/or the server 104.

[0039] In another aspect, the invention may be implemented as a non-transitory computer readable medium containing software for causing a computer or computer system to perform the method described above. The software can include various modules that are used to enable a processor and a user interface to perform the methods described herein.

[0040] It will be readily appreciated by those skilled in the art that modifications may be made to the invention without departing from the concepts disclosed in the foregoing description. Accordingly, the particular embodiments described in detail herein are illustrative only and are not limiting to the scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

1. A computer implemented method, comprising:
obtaining, from a spectrophotometric device, reflectance data from a target coating, wherein the reflectance data comprises two or more associated arrays including a primary array of angle and a secondary array of wavelength;
sorting the reflectance data by the secondary array;
calculating from the reflectance data, using a processor, pivot-normalized reflectance data according to

$$\frac{X-\mu}{\sigma} \quad \text{Equation (1)}$$

where X is a specific data set value, μ is a sample or population average of data set values within the sorted secondary array, and σ is a sample or population standard deviation of the data set values within the sorted secondary array; and

generating based on the pivot-normalized reflectance data, using the processor, a coating pigmentation that is the same or substantially similar in appearance to the target coating, wherein generating the coating pigmentation comprises empirically correlating the pivot-normalized data calculated for the target coating to a plurality of known pivot-normalized data calculated for an empirical dataset and predicting at least one texture feature of the target coating based on the correlating.

$$\frac{X-\mu}{\sigma}$$

2. The method of claim 1, wherein predicting at least one texture feature of the target coating based on the correlating comprises predicting, using at least one empirical calculation, at least one texture feature of the target coating based on the correlating.

3. A system, comprising:
a database; and
a processor in communication with the database and programmed to:
obtain reflectance data from a target coating wherein the reflectance data comprises two or more associated arrays including a primary array of angle and a secondary array of wavelength;
sort the reflectance data by the secondary array;

calculate from the obtained reflectance data pivot-normalized reflectance data according to

$$\frac{X-\mu}{\sigma} \quad \text{Equation (1)}$$

where X is a specific data set value, μ is a sample or population average of data set values within the sorted secondary array, and σ is a sample or population standard deviation of the data set values within the sorted secondary array; and

generate based on the pivot-normalized reflectance data a coating pigmentation that is the same or substantially similar in appearance to the target coating, wherein generating the coating pigmentation comprises empirically correlating the pivot-normalized data calculated for the target coating to a plurality of known pivot-normalized data calculated for an empirical dataset and predicting at least one texture feature of the target coating based on the correlating.

4. The system of claims 3, further comprising a spectrophotometer in communication with the processor.

5. An apparatus, comprising:

means for obtaining reflectance data from a target coating, wherein the reflectance data comprises two or more associated arrays including a primary array of angle and a secondary array of wavelength;

means for sorting the reflectance data by the secondary array;

means for calculating from the obtained reflectance data pivot-normalized reflectance data according to

$$\frac{X-\mu}{\sigma} \quad \text{Equation (1)}$$

where X is a specific data set value, μ is a sample or population average of data set values within the sorted secondary array, and σ is a sample or population standard deviation of the data set values within the sorted secondary array; and

means for generating based on the pivot-normalized data a coating pigmentation that is the same or substantially similar in appearance to the target coating, wherein generating the coating pigmentation comprises empirically correlating the pivot-normalized data calculated for the target coating to a plurality of

known pivot-normalized data calculated for an empirical dataset and predicting at least one texture feature of the target coating based on the correlating.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the means for predicting at least one texture feature of the target coating based on the correlating comprises means for predicting, using at least one empirical calculation, at least one texture feature of the target coating based on the correlating.

7. A non-transitory computer readable medium including software for causing a processor to:

obtain reflectance data from a target coating, wherein the reflectance data comprises two or more associated arrays including a primary array of angle and a secondary array of wavelength;

sort the reflectance data by the secondary array;

calculate from the reflectance data pivot-normalized reflectance data according to

$$\frac{X-\mu}{\sigma} \quad \text{Equation (1)}$$

where X is a specific data set value, μ is a sample or population average of data set values within the sorted secondary array, and σ is a sample or population standard deviation of the data set values within the sorted secondary array; and

generate based on the pivot-normalized data a coating pigmentation that is the same or substantially similar in appearance to the target coating, wherein generating the coating pigmentation comprises empirically correlating the pivot-normalized data calculated for the target coating to a plurality of known pivot-normalized data calculated for an empirical dataset and predicting at least one texture feature of the target coating based on the correlating.