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White Space: An Overlooked Element of Design

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WHITE SPACE: AN OVERLOOKED ELEMENT OF DESIGN

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

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*****

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ABSTRACT

There are many different elements used to enhance visual appeal in Advertising and Graphic design. While all elements of design are important, arranging all of these components effectively, affects the overall visual appeal to viewers. The use of space may be thought of as the single, most important element of design. How things are arranged contributes to how effective an advertisement is to its audience. While space is important, it is also vastly taken for granted, specifically in the form of "white space." Whitespace is important to visual appeal in many ways. This includes readability, viewer perception of brand image, drawing focus, and creating harmony. Whitespace has numerous names and definitions, and can be applied as a design tool in many ways adding function as well as elegance to an advertisement. By employing current and past portfolio pieces, as well as some famous advertisements that use differing amounts of whitespace, my intended outcome will be to prove whitespace as an essential tool to advertising design.

Keywords: Advertising, Graphic Design, White Space, Design Elements, Visual Appeal

Dedicated to

My Mom and Dad for all the support and encouragement given me throughout my years,

and for always being supportive of my goals and dreams.

I love you to the moon and back.

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INTRODUCTION

Design is about function and communication. Graphic design involves generating

ideas and having designer's turn them into a visual form that communicates a message

for an intended audience. There are many different design elements used to enhance

visual appeal in Advertising and Graphic Design. While all the elements of design are

important, arranging all of these components effectively, affects the overall visual appeal

to viewers. Perhaps the single, most important component of the elements of design is

that of "Negative space" or "White space."

Emptiness, or White Space, has many different definitions and can be often

thought of as just blank space. However, the definition best chosen for this paper is

defined as "the conspicuously open space found between other design elements or objects

within the borders of an ad" (Pracejus 82). The name white space was derived from the

use of white paper as the background material of its time (White 21). White space can

also be known as negative space, emptiness, leftover space or it is also sometimes

shortened and referred to as space in general. White space does not necessarily have to be

white. It can be any color as long as it is negative space that has not been filled with a

form. For example, it can be a background color that is surrounding an object.

White space is the glue that holds all design together. One of the major problems that most beginning designers, and even seasoned professionals struggle with is the notion to fill the page. "Young designers often want to fill every inch of space within an ad" (Blakeman 45). This is one of the biggest mistakes that designers make repeatedly. They think that in order to convey the message to the audience they must bombard the viewer with information. As said by author Alexander White, "The single most overlooked element in visual design is emptiness" (White 19). Here lies the problem. As important as whitespace is, it is also vastly taken for granted. The purpose of this paper is to analyze current and past portfolio pieces, as well as famous advertisements that use differing amounts of whitespace, to prove whitespace as an essential tool to advertising design.

CHAPTER 2

TYPES OF WHITE SPACE

In order to understand white space, one must first understand positive and

negative space. Positive space is a form, a solid thing or object (Samara 37). Space is

always considered negative. Space is the "ground" in which a form becomes a "figure"

(Samara 37). This becomes what is known as a figure/ground relationship, a key

principle in Gestalt Theory (Gestalt Theory will be discussed further in Chapter 4). A

figure/ground relationship is the relationship of the subject to its surrounding space. Form

and space are dependent on one another because without space there cannot be a form,

and without a form there cannot be space. It is impossible to alter one and have it not

affect the other. Samara writes, "Confrontation between figure and ground defines the

kind of visual activity, movement, and sense of three-dimensionality perceived by the

viewer" (37).

There are two types of white space: active and passive white space. Active white

space can be defined as, "space intentionally left blank for a better visual structure and

layout," while passive white space is defined as, "empty space around the outside of the

page or blank areas inside the content which is the by product of layout process" (Liez

"11 Reasons Why White Spaces are Good in Graphic Design"). White space in a

symmetrical design is considered passive because it is not integral to our perception of

the positive elements, and if noticed at all it is seen just as a background (White 41). In

other words, active white space is space that is intentionally used to enhance the design. It is space that is carefully considered emptiness (White 43). Passive white space is space that is just there; it is not being used for anything meaningful but serves as a type of margin for the page.

Two components of active white space are types of spaces known as macro and micro space. Macro space can be defined as, "the space between major elements in a composition," while micro space is, "the space between smaller elements" (Boulton "Whitespace"). Figure 1 shows macro space as the space between copy and another large element, like an image, and shows micro space as the small amount of white space between elements like an image and its caption or a headline and sub-head.

Figure 1. Micro and Macro Space

CHAPTER 3

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN IN RELATION TO WHITE SPACE

The relationship of white space in each of the Principles of Design is not often an obvious one, but it is always a key underlying factor. Principles include proportion, balance, emphasis, unity and harmony. The element of proportion is a relationship of sizes (Nelson 105). Proportion can range anywhere from the width to the depth of an object or the amount of space between two elements to another element. Proportion can also include the use of color. For example, the amount of light areas in an advertisement verses the amount of dark, and the use of color contrasted by the use of no color. "To achieve pleasing proportions in his ad, then, the designer arranges spaces so that the eye does not perceive obvious mathematical relationships" (Nelson 107). In other words, you use space to fool the eye into perceiving a natural relationship. This is where white space comes in. When deciding the proportions of an advertisement, white space can be used to divide the page into a grid or it can serve as way of contrast. Pictures and art can be used in larger proportions utilizing white space as a margin or background. Margins are the white space that appears between the inside edges of an ad and where the copy or visual elements begin (Blakeman 45). Margins can be thought of as a type of border around the outer edges of a page or the area around elements like a photograph.
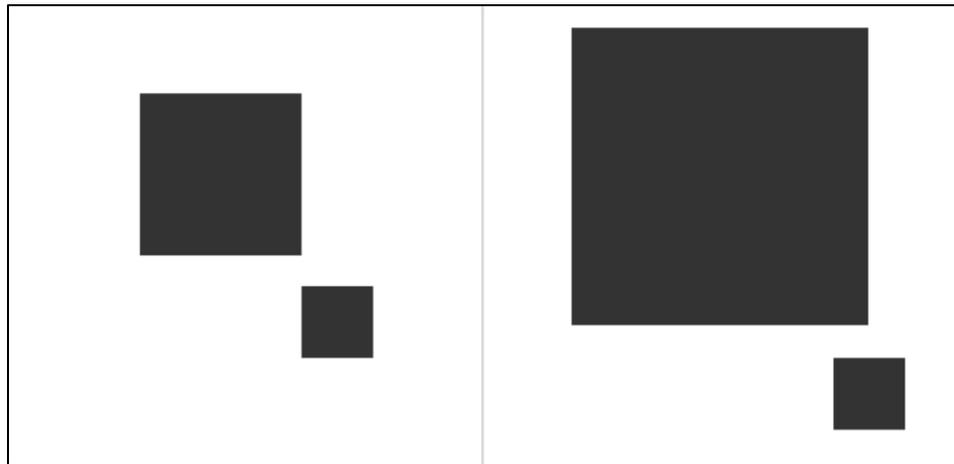
Figure 2. Proportion

In this figure, the size of the format space compared to the form in it changes the

perception of the form. A smaller form in a large spatial format – which will have a

relatively restrained presence – will be perceived differently from a large form in the

same format – which will be perceived as confrontational (Samara 35).

Balance is known as visual weight. In order for an advertisement to be

proportional it must balance equal parts. In order to keep an ad balanced, it must contrast

something with equal visual weight or repeat it by the use of symmetry. "Positive space is

visually heavier than negative space. So a lot of filled space requires balancing amounts

of empty space" (Hagen 55). In other words, the white space must also be balanced or it

must be used to balance the contrasting parts of an advertisement. Figure 3 is an example

of multiple methods that can be used to balance design. Methods include contrasting and

complementing colors, symmetry, different or similar shapes, etc.
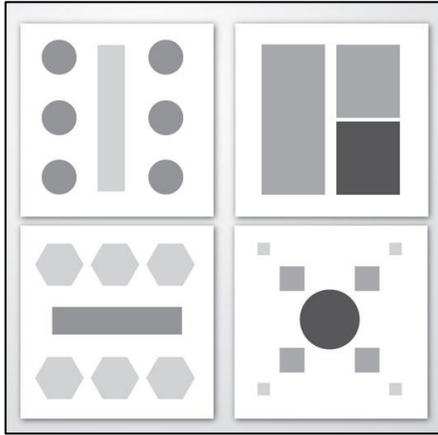
Figure 3. Balance ("The Principles"; The Elements and Principles of Graphic Design;

Ramapo.edu; 22 April 2014; Web.

The next design principle is the element of emphasis. Emphasis is the use of a focal point to draw interest to a page. A focal point can be defined as "the most important thing visually on a layout" (Hagen 51). A focal point is used to direct the viewer's attention. According to the text *Design Basics,* "without an audience's attention, any message, any artistic or aesthetic values, are lost" (Lauer 46). Another way emphasis is important is because without a focal point the eye has no place to go and it "wanders aimlessly around the layout" (Hagen 51). In Figure 3 below, each image has one element, whether it is a higher stroke weight around a circle or a filled circle rather than an empty one that is creating some sort of focal point. Each element serves as a focal point because they become something that stands out to the viewer. Because they are different, elements draw or pull attention. Using white space is the easiest way of creating a focal point. White space allows the most important thing on the page to stand out by surrounding it with nothingness. When other points of interest or emphasis are present that may not have as much attention value than the focal point, they are called accents (Lauer 46). White space literally "accents" the page. White space draws attention to every element on the page that is swimming in vast amounts of white space because the element is alone. Creating a separation from other elements with white space places more emphasis on key elements that carry meaning.
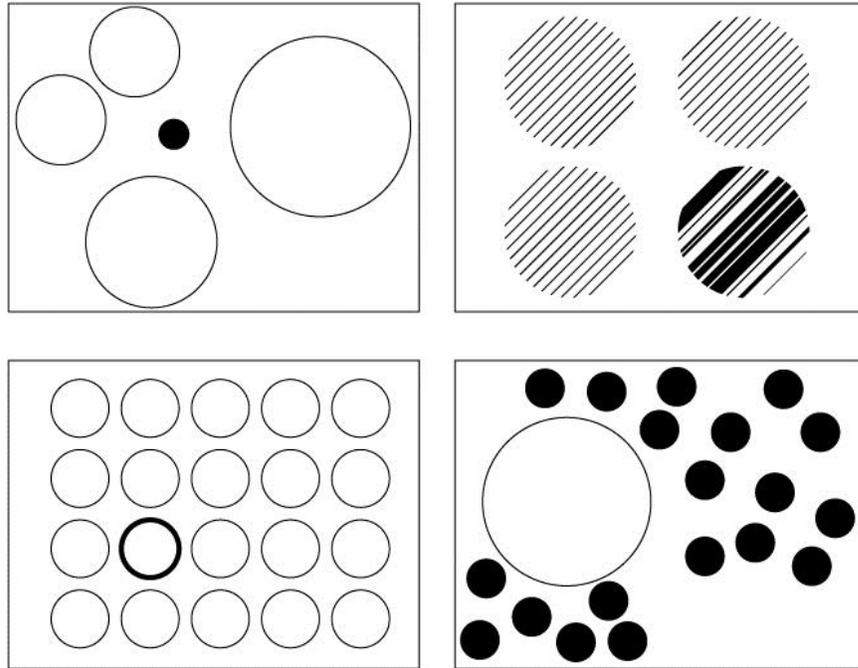
Figure 4. Emphasis (Twenty-First Century Art and Design; Benjaminclancy.com; 22

April 2014; Web.)

The last principles of design that white space plays a part in are the principles of

unity and harmony. While unity and harmony are two separate principles, essentially they

convey the same meaning. Without harmony one cannot have unity of a layout. Unity

means, "a congruity or agreement exists among the elements in a design" (Lauer 20).

Some sort of similar element connects other elements visually and brings them together,

so that the elements appear as if they belong together rather than having them just appear

randomly on the page. This is fundamentally harmony as well. If elements are not

harmonious then they lack unity. "Unity is achieved through a visual similarity between

oval shapes, linear elements, and the repetition of other geometric patterns. The negative

shapes or spaces between the forms are also similar and repeated" (Lauer 20). Unity

takes forms and organizes them visually, making them seem like one "cohesive design or

visual message." Unity flows into the idea of Gestalt Theory because it deals with "the way our brains see order in visual chaos" (Hagen 58).
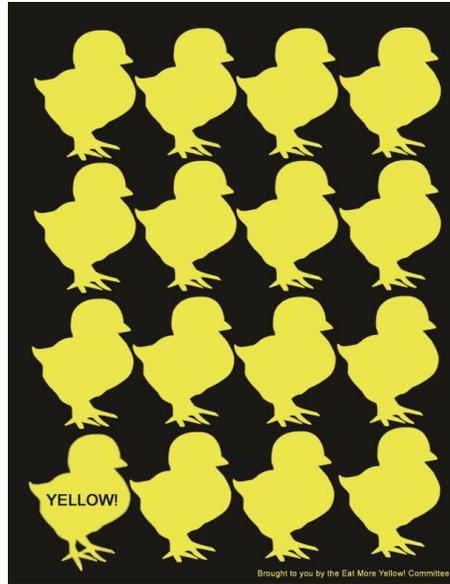
Figure 5. Unity ("Unity:Repition"; Graphic Design: The Unity/Emphasis Ads;

highlandtechnology.org; 22 April 2014; Web.)

Figure 5 shows a grouping of chicks. Even though one stands out because it is the only one with text on it, figure size, shape and color unify the image so that the image becomes whole.

CHAPTER 4

GESTALT THEORY

Gestalt Theory is an idea based on the way the brain perceives and arranges objects. According to Alex White, it is a "design's wholeness" (83). In the text *Design Basics,* "the viewer tends to group objects that are close to each other into a larger unit." Negative spaces will be organized and our brain will tend to relate and group objects of similar shapes. The brain looks for "like" elements and when it recognizes them, it sees a cohesive design instead of unorganized chaos (Lauer 25).

There are many principles that make up the Gestalt Theory. The first is proximity which is how "we perceive objects that are close together as belonging to the same group" (Hagen 58). When objects are far apart they seem unrelated, random and confusing, but when they are grouped together they are given a sense of meaning. The best way to avoid a busy layout is to achieve unity and the simplest way to achieve unity is through the use of proximity (Lauer 27). In the figure below, the dots on the left seem random and chaotic, but when grouped together, the proximity of the dots forms a shape giving meaning to the group. White space is important to proximity because when too much space is used in a layout, it is hard to read and seems haphazard. However, when objects are spaced evenly and divided appropriately into groups, the design is effective
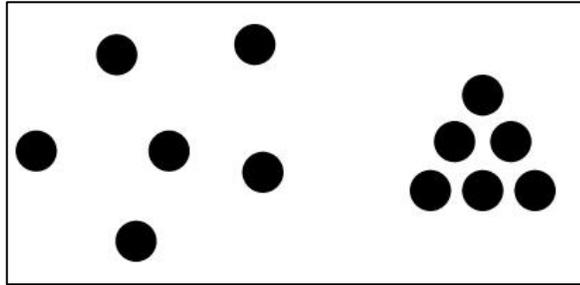
Figure 6. Proximity ("The Law of Proximity"; Gestalt Principles: The Law of Proximity;

jeremybolton.com; 22 April 2014; Web.)

The second principle of Gestalt Theory is that of continuation. This is "the
arrangement of forms so they are 'continuous' from one element to another, leading the
eye across space" (White 85). Essentially, some sort of element, whether it is implied like
white space or a real form, carries the eye from one element to another like the illusion of
a swooping line in Figure 7, carries the eye from one element to another.

Figure 7. Continuation ("Continuation"; The Gestalt Principles;

graphicdesign.spokenfalls.edu; 22 April 2014; Web.)

Simply put, this is the flow of elements. You want your viewer to be engaged in
the advertisement; therefore, you want them to view the advertisement as long as
possible. This can be achieved by using the elements in some sort of pattern so that the

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eye smoothly flows from element to element and will continue to flow until back at it's

starting point. White space is a good way of creating this path. The negative space allows

an invisible line for the eye to follow, drawing the viewer into each element and leading

them around the page until back at the focal point.

Another principle of Gestalt Theory, one that also relies heavily on the use of

white space, is closure or completion. This is where the viewer naturally tries to close

gaps and complete unfinished forms (White 58). These forms engage the viewer in

finding the meaning of the message. "The idea of designing with only a part but having

your viewer perceive the whole opens up interesting compositional opportunities,

including the interplay of positive and negative space" (Hagen 60). In figures 8 & 9, both

positive and negative space is used to create a complete form. In Figure 8, a full panda is

seen though only part of the figure has been given. A similar visual connection happens

in Figure 9, in this portfolio example the shape of a plane is made out of the negative

space because the positive forms allow for the completion of the shape. This example is

not only using the principle of closure but also relies on the pervious principle of

continuation as well. The given shapes on the bottom tail of the plane allow the

continuation of an invisible line to form the idea of the top of the tail of the plane.

Figures 8 & 9. Examples of Closure ("Closure"; The Gestalt Principles;

graphicdesign.spokenfalls.edu; 22 April 2014; Web.) & Aerospace Logo from Portfolio

CHAPTER 5

SIMPLICITY

White space can be found in many aspects of a layout. White space is very

diverse, and because white space is a simplifier, it enhances an ads appeal. Leslie Segal,

as quoted from *Graphis Diagrams*, says, "Elegance is the measure of the grace and

simplicity of the design relative to the complexity of its functions" (White 1). This means

that when given the option, the advertisement that achieves its purpose of conveying

more information, yet is simpler than that of another advertisement conveying the same

information, is considered more elegant and therefore, more effective. Segal goes on to

state, "Inelegance is a frequent design failing" (White 3). In other words, the time old

saying "less is more" applies greatly to the overall effectiveness of advertisement design.

Well-known American graphic designer, Paul Rand was notorious for his

simplicity. He stated, "Design is so simple, that's why it's so complicated"

(Lewandowski "Paul Rand"). The hardest part of designing is knowing when to leave

things alone. Rand said, "Simplicity is not the goal. It is the by-product of a good idea

and modest expectations" (Lewandowski "Paul Rand"). Designs that are full of useless

clutter become ugly advertisements. "The job is not to fill in all the space in order to

impress the reader with sheer quantity of information. That will just overwhelm the

reader with over fullness" (White 5). As best put by Rand, "Good design adds value of

some kind, gives meaning, and, not incidentally, can be sheer pleasure to behold; it

respects the viewer's sensibilities and rewards the entrepreneur" (Lewandowski "Paul Rand"). Advertisements that include and utilize white space properly give way to elegant a simplistic advertisements that becomes pleasing to viewers rather than those that use white space poorly.

Many beginning designers love to fill the page to full capacity in order for every bit of information about what is being sold to be included in the selling message. In design, more is most definitely not better. There must be an economy in using type and imagery, or mark of any kind (White 9). Meaningless frills that merely clutter up an advertisement and that do not reinforce the selling message should be eliminated (Edwards 149). Because the purpose of an advertisement is to sell a product or idea, the message needs to be as clear as possible to ensure that it is not lost in visual noise. The brain sifts images and bits of type. It innately simplifies and groups similar elements. If it cannot easily make these connections, it perceives confusion (White 7). The more cluttered an advertisement is the harder it becomes to decipher its meaning. This advertisement by Paul Rand for International Business Machines (IBM) in 1981 was one of his more popular designs. This is a primary example of what simplicity and negative space can accomplish for design.
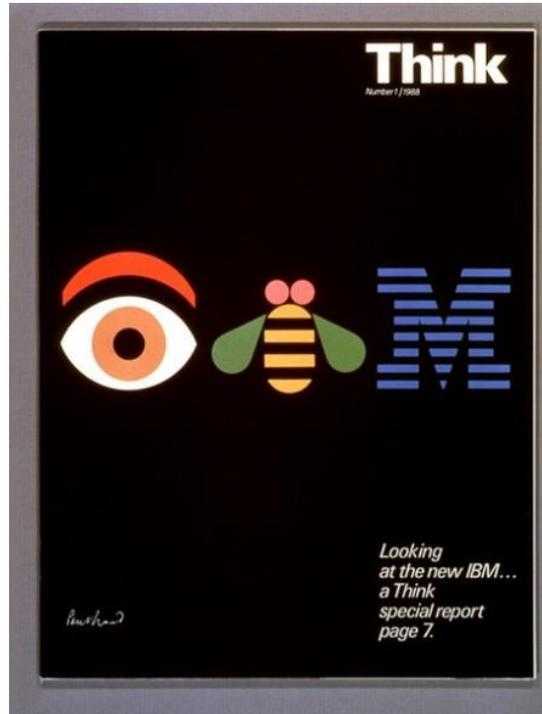
Figure 10. IBM (“IBM Corporate Identity By Paul”; Designers Book; Designers-

book.com, 6 May 2014; Web.)

In this design, Rand uses negative space as a background to let his clever play on the abbreviation stand out. The poster does not need any further explanation as to what it means but it does create a need for more information. Because of this need consumers are willing to read on and put in the extra effort needed because the design is so grabbing. Nothing more needs to be said to hook viewers. The design speaks for itself. This is what negative space allows for in design: creativity. Simplicity leads to more creativity and better ideas.

CHAPTER 6

WHITE SPACE IN TYPOGRAPHY

Typography is "applying type in an expressive way to reveal the content clearly and memorably with the least resistance from the reader" (White 149). Typography is more than just characters and words; it is about arranging letterforms so that they are effective and pleasing to the audience. White space shows up in typography in the form of leading, tracking and kerning, also known as letter-spacing. It can also be shown in size and weight of a text or font.

Leading is known as the space between lines of text, shown in the figure below. The name leading comes from the days where typesetters used a slug of lead to separate each line of type by hand (Hagen 95). The more something has been "led," the more space there is between lines of text, and the less "led" something is, the closer the lines of text. Leading that is very tight, or uses less white space between lines, is usually used in larger text such as a headline or subhead (Blakeman 75). This is because these elements need to stand out or stand-alone. Body copy needs to be grouped so it can be read as a whole. The leading for body copy is more consistently set and is often not adjusted, except in very small amounts.
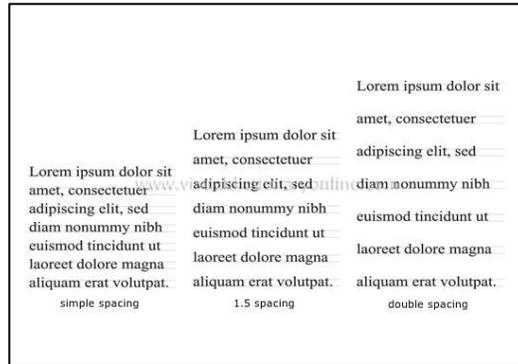
Figure 11. Leading Example ("Leading"; Visual Dictionary Online; Marriam-Webster.com, 22 April 2014; Web.)

Kerning is defined as the amount of space between two characters (Bailey " The Basics of Typography"). Kerning is used to space out individual letterforms so that they are not tense and difficult to read. Examples of Kerning are shown in the figures below.
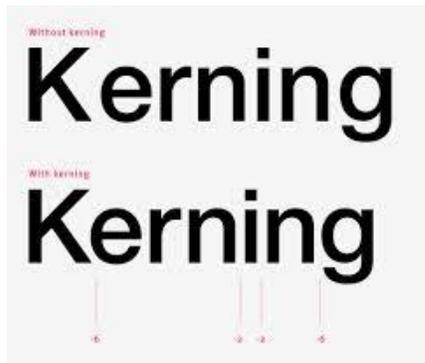
Figure 12. Kerning (Kern, the Appreciation of Empty Space; eesur.com; 22 April 2014; Web.)

Figure 13. Aura logo

Figure 13 shows a real life example of how kerning may be used. In this figure, the characters that form the word aura have been evenly kerned so that the space between them is equal. If they were any closer together, due to the curve or the "r" around the "a" the shapes would seem connected. This would make any attempt at reading the word difficult and the visual appeal would suffer from this greatly.

Tracking is a combination of both kerning and leading. This is the space between groups of characters (Bailey " The Basics of Typography"). When tracking occurs both the white space between lines of text, as well as, the space between characters is expanded.

Anytime a word or letterform is increased or decreased in size white space is used. As type is decreased in size, the letter-spacing must be increased to allow the eye to separate the letters for clarity. At the other extreme, the space between letters must be decreased as the type size increase beyond reading size (Samara 121). If letters are too close together, the word becomes unclear and hard to recognize. Readers often can tell

what a word is from just seeing the first and last letters, so if the type is unclear and squished then the reader has to put in extra effort to understand the message.

White space can also create meaning in typography. Fonts that have a heavier weight are not always interpreted as elegant than one that is of lighter weight. Times New Roman is perceived as timeless and upscale, while a font like Arial Black, which is bold and chunky, can be thought of as low budget. Therefore, because more space is being utilized with a font of lighter weight, it is using more white space because it takes up less space on the page. Another way white space can be used is to create meaning is if a designer wants to put extra emphasis on a word. This can be accomplished utilizing white space. For example, in Figure 14 is the words space and clutter. The use of white space is creating a literal meaning in each word by using a vast or little amount of kerning. In the word space, there is a lot of kerning that is being used. Likewise, in the word clutter, there is little to no white space in order to make a tense and cluttered form.

Figure 14. Creating Meaning Through Type

CHAPTER 7

WHITE SPACE IN ADVERTISING PRINT DESIGN

White space enhances an advertisement's readability. Readability occurs when a viewer is able to read an advertisement at first glance (Blakeman 44). The more crowded an advertisement, the harder it is for the viewer to read. Over-crowding makes it more difficult to sort out the important information. In design, you want to leave ample space because if without it, the advertisement becomes overwhelming and viewers will not look at it. White states, "Good readability makes the page comfortable to read," and "poor readability makes the page look dull or busy" (13). Effective use of white space is the key to an organized design that enhances readability and legibility (Blakeman 44). Figure 15, this image of a brochure is extremely cluttered and hard to read. It is difficult to sort out the important message, because the overall feel of this advertisement is distracting, disorganized and therefore, hard to read.

Figure 15. Busy Brochure Example (Starbursts: Like Fireworks, But More Annoying; The IBD Blog; www.interpretationbydesign.com; 22 April 2014; Web.)

Figure 16 is an example portfolio piece. This brochure design utilizes vast

amounts of white space and uses it to enhance readability. The use of margins allows for

a clean border and easily separates the information into groups making the design

readable. The white space surrounds the most important information and allows it to

stand out from the rest of the design; in this case, this is the logo.

Figure 16. WKU Real Brochure

White space organizes design elements, therefore enhancing readability. Placing

white space around an object attracts attention to that object by separating design

elements. In order to understand how to attract attention, designers must first understand

eye flow. "Eye flow involves aligning the ad components so the eye can follow a

predetermined path" (Blakeman 23). Numerous experiments on tracking eye movement

on a page have been done to give designers an idea of where best to place elements for

maximum effectiveness. In these tests, viewers were given pages to scan and their eye-movements tracked using an eye camera or by tracking heat signatures. According to Arthur Turnbull and Russell Baird, writers of *The Graphics of Communication*, the eye typically tends to move to the left and up as well as preferring a horizontal movement (167). When reading we typically read left to right, top to bottom however, "altering this simple pattern by placing unrelated photos of floating text within an ad creates confusion, causing consumers to miss important points or visuals" (Blakeman 45). Because viewers have these tendencies to follow a certain pattern while reading, designers use white space to help navigate the eye movements. Negative space can form invisible lines (Hagen 46). These invisible lines are what leads the reader to the important elements: directing their eye flow into its natural perceived pattern.

If the viewer is confused about meaning then the advertisement is not doing its job. An advertisement is designed to simply communicate a message with little effort for the viewer. If the viewer has to work at reading an advertisement they may not read or retain it. White space creates a stopping place for the eye, making reading easier (Blakeman 44). A cluttered page is both ugly stressful to the reader. A content heavy advertisement puts strain on the viewer's eyes by forcing them to dig harder for important content. The majority of readers are already declined to exert much effort in digging out the meaning or importance of a message because they are either too busy or uninterested in the subject (White 7). Good design reduces the effort of reading and encourages readership and understanding (White 3). In his book, Turnbull quotes from Travers: "If a person is flooded with more information than he can handle, his performance becomes quite ineffective… he does not separate out little pieces of the task for learning. He may

learn nothing" (170). Overdesigning an advertisement and filling it with clutter hinders audience readability. White space automatically draws the audience in and interests them without them realizing they have stopped to view the page. "Ideally, the reader should be unaware of the act of reading" and white space accomplishes this, as well as making them more readable (White 9).

Because designers realize that eye flow is critical to understanding an advertisement's message (Blakeman 45). For an advertisement to serve its purpose of selling, the layout must focus the reader's attention immediately on the one main fact or idea (Edwards 150). In order to create eye flow there must first be a focal point. Samara writes, "You're designing to grab the audience's attention, to get them the information they need, and to help them remember it afterwards. If there's no focus to start with, you've already lost" (14). Again, white space is the easiest and most effective way of creating this focal point.

Visual stimulation is when some sort of visual element draws the viewer to the page and stimulates their brain. This draws viewers into the page, arousing their curiosity and actively involving them in the process of absorbing information. Drawing attention is what a focal point does. When white space surrounds an image like in figure 16, the image or message is instantly the first thing the viewer notices. Because white space can be so striking, the viewer then asks themselves why this is so important, and will often times read on in order to find out. If attention is not grabbed in the first five seconds a viewer views a page, the page gets turned and all hope for selling is lost. Generous amounts of white space can be reserved as a blank presentation area, thus allowing headings to 'pop out' and wide graphics to be extended (White 3). White space is

creating emphasis on the message that needs to be sold like in the Volkswagen "Think Small" campaign (represented in Figure 16), created by Helmut Krone with copy by Julian Koenig at the Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB) agency in 1959.
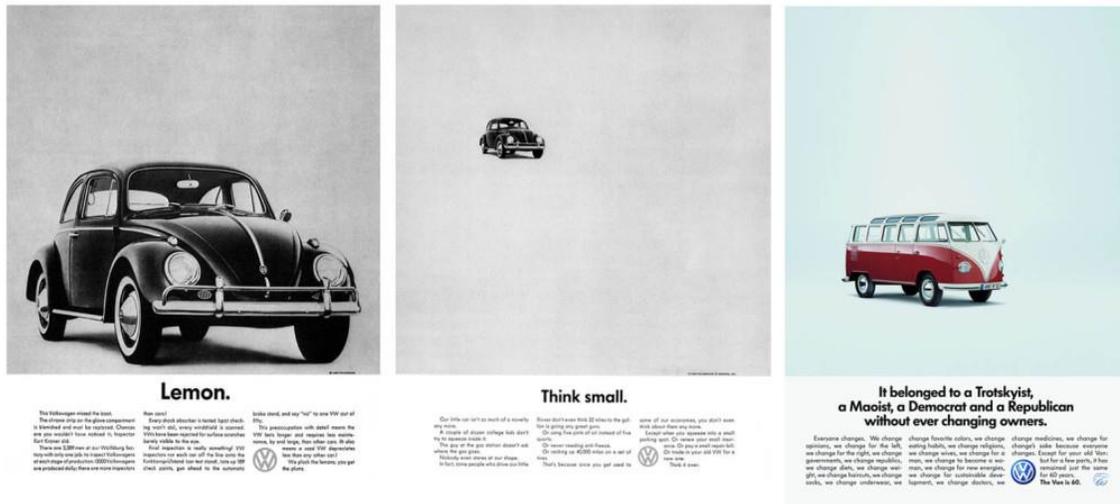
Figure 17. "Think Small" Campaign

These designers knew of the negative perception of the German made car due to Nazi usage in World War II. They knew they needed to do something drastic that would change the consumer's perception and make them believe that a smaller car could be better than a large clunker. This is why they chose to put a tiny car in the middle of so much white space. With a plain white background, your eye is instantly drawn to the image of the car as the focal point. This point of emphasis in turn changes this tiny "lemon" into something new, bold and powerful to consumers, making it fashionable and wanted.

White space, like color, can enhance or change the appeal of brand image. Every color has a range of emotions that are associated with them. Just like every color, the

absence of color can also have psychological effects. Empty space can represent quality, solitude, a feeling of something missing, cleanliness, purity, Heaven, abundance, openness, calmness and ice. White space is "considered extravagant, exclusive, classy. It symbolizes wealth and luxury" (White 49). Mortelmans states in *Visualizing Emptiness,* that the principle connection behind emptiness and luxury is the idea of *horror vacui* (2005). *Horror vacui* is the fear of the empty. Because of this fear people feel the need to decorate or fill gaps. Mortelmans goes on to state that this is human nature and a natural urge to fill empty spaces is controlled by the civilizing process. Mortelmans writes,

> If this is true, the higher classes will develop some sort of *amor vacui.* The "empty" becomes a sign of cultivation and good taste. The *amor vacui* in higher classes shows that the Elias' civilization theory goes further tan taking note of etiquette. Restraining oneself both physically and mentally makes the principle of *amor vacui* into a mark of distinction. Those who have the power to overcome their own *horror vacui* instinct can distinguish themselves. (21)

White space is the *horror vacui.* If it is overcome and white space is embraced as a design element, then luxury and distinction is associated with designs that utilize vast amounts of white space. Along the lines of *horror vacui,* is the idea of scarcity. In *The Psychology of Advertising*, Fennis and Strobe write, "People tend to value those things that are in short supply, difficult to obtain or rare, more than they value objects that are plentiful, or easy to obtain. Luxury items derive a major part of their value from reduced availability (256). White space in advertisements can create a high-end feel by surrounding the subject with an excessive amount of room. An excess of nothingness allows the viewer to perceive the object surround by white space as scarce and luxurious. This signifies to the reader that there is plenty of room to spare, frames the image with an "aura of inaccessibility" and the less crowded the advertisement is the "more elitist its attitude" (Heller 150). Blakeman writes, "The lack of white space in an ad can indicate

the quality of the store and the products it sells. In the consumer's mind, clutter means low budget" (45). Therefore, the more white space used, the more the design is interpreted as sophisticated and luxurious. Cosmetics advertisers are often fond of the use of white in their campaign advertisements because it represents cleanliness which is essential to the product being sold. In the Figure 18, white space is used to show that the product can be considered high quality and expensive; and therefore, makes the product seem worthy to buy due to the quality feel. The entire brand image is based on the use of excessive white space to simplify the advertisement, drawing focus to the product and allowing the consumer to visually trust the brand. In this example, the Chanel advertisement uses excessive amounts of white space in order to show its clients that it can afford to spend money on emptiness. The image of the brand is so exclusive and high end that little needs to be said or represented by the advertisement because people who can afford these products already know what there is to know about the company. Others who don't are plagued with a sense of mystery and illusion, which creates a higher appeal for the brand.

Figure 18. Chanel Ad (Chanel Collection; examiner.com; 22 April 2014; Web.)

CHAPTER 8

WHITE SPACE IN ADVERTISING WEB DESIGN

Web Design is much like Print Design because it needs to have a focal point, visual hierarchy, balance, rhythm and flow (Hagen 218). Just like as in Print Design, a website needs to be readable, attention grabbing and uncluttered. As applied to Web Design white space is known as the "on-screen areas that do not contain text, graphics or other visual elements" (Loh 1). The purpose of a website is to communicate a message and be functional just like it would in any other category of design. This effectiveness to communicate is a website's usability. Usability focuses on functionality, the effective presentation of information and efficiency (Beaird "The Principles of Beautiful Web Design"). The amount of white space that is utilized affects usability. The amount of white space used in Web Design greatly effects the over all usability of a website.

Like in Print Design, white space in Web Design can be aesthetic but it is mostly used for functional purposes. "White space is critical for imposing structure to organize and differentiate content by providing contrast against content and text" (Loh 2). Like in print, when white space is used effectively, it forms a visual cohesiveness by drawing attention to relevant and important elements and unifying the design. White space allows important elements to stand out against the background as well as creates a visual hierarchy of elements on the page. White space reduces clutter and allows messaging to be the primary focus as well as again creating better brand perception.

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Another reason white space is key to usability is through the absorbability of the message. According to Loh, "content competes for cognitive resources, and because human working memory is limited, excessive content places additional load on information processing and reduces cognitive resources left for comprehension" (3). This means that effective use of white space allows users to direct attention more efficiently to important content. The simpler a site is, the easier the perceived use. This refers to "the perceived amount of effort that users believe are required from them to carry out a task (Loh 4). Because white space limits clutter and sorts out important information, it therefore, makes the site more user friendly.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION

Designing is a process of planning. In order to create a design, one must first plan what is needed and what is important to convey. "The process of design is used to bring order from chaos and randomness. Order is good for readers, who can more easily make sense of an organized message. An ordered message is therefore considered good design" (White 1). This is what white space does for design. It brings order to chaos.

In order for white space to be effective, designers must be able to properly utilize it. This does not mean that in every advertisement excessive amounts of white space are used, but instead knowing when and how to use white space so it is effective. The first step designers need to know is what is the brand's message: what needs to be communicated? When designers know the message, they understand what is and is not important to the selling of this message. Once this has been determined, designing can occur. Depending on the message being communicated, little white space may be used but it must be used properly.

In the re-branding of the Kentucky State Parks Foundation (KSPF) the target message was "What is Kentucky without parks?" This message called for an overall dramatic, drastic and dire tone in order to raise funds for state parks. Figures 19 and 20 show examples of two brochures made for KSPF. Each brochure has the overall goal of achieving donators but the target market is different. Figure 19 is a general hand out,

while Figure 20 is targeted specifically at the older generation of around 65 years of age and up.

Figure 19 uses negative space rather than specific white space due to the fact that the negative space is filled with an image. Even though this space is filled it is still considered negative space. The element that most stands out in the brochure layout is that of the Kentucky State vector. This element is drawing attention due to the strong contrast between white and dark gray as well as positive and negative space. While the left side of this layout is visually heavier due to all of the copy, the space between each of the facts divides the space so that each fact is grouped. This makes the copy easier to read and maximizes absorbability of the information given. The different uses of strokes on the lower right panel, take up differing amounts of space also allowing for clearer readership even though the leading of the lines of text is tight. Although there is a lot of information that is given, the use of negative space allows for each element to blend cohesively adding to the selling message and creating a great design concept.

In Figure 20, more negative space has been utilized. While this is good, it also leaves something to be desired. Because the top and bottom bands spread the width of the brochure they are creating balance; however, the off-sided middle shape is throwing this off. While asymmetry is good in most cases, here it seems as if something is missing. There is a hole of white space that is pulling attention away from important information on the page. This is known as the white hole phenomenon.

Figure 19. KSPF Brochure

Figure 20. KSPF Donator Brochure

Another issue that has been created is in the copy at the bottom of the page. The first line of text has been kerned and led equally, but the line under it does not utilize the same amount of space. While the two text sizes are different there should still be the same amount of leading between lines. If not, like in this example, the text is farther from one line and too close to the line below it. This makes the copy hard to read and is a mistake most beginners' make. In adding another element, like an image to balance out the visual weight of the page and by making sure that all copy is evenly led, these small changes would greatly develop the overall appeal of this design ensuring greater structure and elegance for viewers.

There is no set measurement for the amount of white space to be used and it is often judged by the designer eyeing the space. However, a few guidelines have been put in place: In *The Bare Bones of Advertising Print Design,* Blakeman states that margins should be no less than one-forth inch on all sides, have as much as two or three inches of white space surrounding text or visuals and there should be one-forth an inch space between columns of text or between visuals (45). Too much of a margin can make elements look disconnected and too little clutters the page. Other things to remember as general guidelines to creating an effective design are thatfullness should be balanced with emptiness and that everything has shape, including emptiness. White space, within type and around columns and pictures, must be considered shapes and therefore, must be treated as such (White 99). Use white space to create a buffer zone to make objects look larger than they are by surrounding them with a thick border. If there is too much of one element, balance it with something that is not as heavy such as white space so that the advertisement does not look cluttered and overwhelming. If the image is the most

important element of the message, then it may fill the page and white space will be utilized in the margins by putting enough space between them and other elements. If not enough white space is used between elements it creates visual tension making the advertisement cluttered and difficult to decipher.

When applying white space, make sure it is applied uniformly and consistently. White space should always be used with meaning and message in mind. In other words, don't use vast amounts of white space unless there is a specific message or emotion that needs to be conveyed. Always be sure to evenly space out elements. White space connects elements when used in consistent, measured amounts in design (White 125). Like in the theory of Proximity, elements can be separated by distance or related by being near. The closer elements are, the more related they seem to be. "Wide spaces separate and narrow spaces connect" (White 125). If elements utilize white space to space themselves out evenly, then the page will connect. Use white space to guide the viewer's eye to the most important information. Allowing viewers to focus on a few main points, rather than a page full of them, will ensure maximum absorbability. Most importantly utilize only the most vital information. Keeping advertisements simple will allow proper communication in design.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

The effects of white space in advertising are known to influence the overall visual appeal of the design. As Zdralek said, " Nothing can replace white space" (1). White space is found everywhere in an advertisement from the margins, borders, typography and background. White space is not just space that is white. It is any and all negative space, colored or not. It has many uses and is profoundly regarded as a key design tool to most experienced designers. When used correctly whitespace enhances design by easing eyestrain and making statements about context. Though most of this research was done on white space in print, white space has also been found especially important to other areas of advertising such as websites. The same principles that apply in Print Design apply in Web Design. Research shows that white space in print is critical to audience readability allowing the eye to have a stopping point to rest and enhancing the absorbability of information given. White space is also known to have a positive effect of brand perception and allows more elegant designs. The findings of this research prove white space is an important fundamental element in Advertising and Graphic Design.

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