Original Research Article

Color in Visual Communication Design

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Abstract: Visual communication design process needs to use specific elements to describe, display and convey relevant information, therefor the concept of "design language" is created. The elements of design are the basic vocabulary of design language, and color is one of the most important elements.
Keywords: Color; Visual communication design; Graphic designers; Design elements

1. Visual Communication design

We live in a world that's dominated by information and advanced technology. The boom in the exchange of information started since the end of last century, thanks to the rise of the internet. The information age has the same importance to humanity as the industrial revolution. These are the two changing the course of mankind events that give an unimaginable force to the development of modern society. With the insane speed that technology is developing, the visual communication has become affected too. Never before has it been easier to reproduce a poster, cover of a book or website.

As senders of information, graphic designers need to clarify what message they want their work to convey. Their job is to provide the information as clearly as possible, and the message that is carrying should stand out in the existing visual chaos in order to be heard and understood.

2. Color

The power of color is unrivalled in visual communication. Because of external factors, color is subjective. The mechanism of color perception is universal for all people. In order to be able to use colors effectively to achieve our goals, we need to know their peculiarities and qualities.

Three are the absolute colors - red, blue and yellow. They are also called basic, which means that they are as distinguished as possible from each other. Any small change in them is noticeable and tends to another main color. When the main colors are mixed, they form secondary shades.

To reach a certain level of understanding of color theory we need to look at some of the earliest color circular diagrams. Some of them can be dated back to the early 1600s. Sir Isaac Newton was developing his own approach to display the relationships between colors. The most famous part of these approach was the experiment with a prism in a dark room. Newton placed the prism in front of a thin beam of light creating a rainbow of colors. This proved that white light was in fact composed of many colors. Developing this
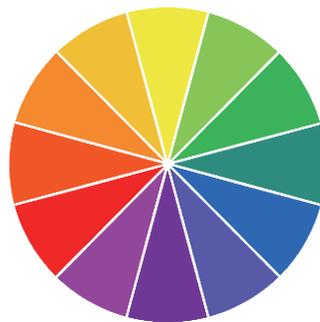
Fig. 1 Color wheel
From: my own personal project

further Newton took the violet color end of the spectrum and connected it to the red color starting point. Like this he created the first color wheel. Newton's color wheel was widely used and became a core tool in theorizing how colors can blend to create other colors. Figure 1 show example of color wheel.

The shades located side by side on the wheel form analog harmony, the opposite colors have complementary harmony, the triad is a color harmony formed by shades located 120 degrees apart on the color wheel. It is important to note that the aforementioned harmonies are on the principle of nuance, there are different relationships based on other properties of color, such as brightness, saturation and temperature. Also, colors can be used to strengthen spatial relationships because of the property of some shades to stand out in front of others. Colors can also reinforce the hierarchy in the message. When choosing a color palette, it is necessary to consider that it is logical, while not losing flexibility. Colors also carry psychological messages, as the human brain does not stop making associations with its familiar experiences. Understanding color symbolism is relative to culture, country, region, and society. The things an artist need to know about color will come from experimentation and experience. For graphic designers specifically it will come also from asking printers questions, getting color advice before going to print, and observation.

(1) Hue is a fundamental property of color defined in its purest form. Hue is the color itself in its purest form. Hue is what we "see" as yellow, red, or blue. It is the result of how we "see" light being reflected from an object. Colors are identifiable only when it is next to another color with which it can be compared. A color with no visible hue, such as gray, is a neutral color.

(2) Saturation is one of the characteristics of colors. It describes the intensity of the color. When it is saturated, it is bright, vibrant. Dark colors are insatiable colors, in which a shade is barely noticeable. As with nuance, the saturation of one color is subjective, and its perception depends on the surrounding colors.

(3) Brightness is the property that determines how dark or light a shade is. It can be determined only in relation to another color. Each shade has a different maximum brightness, for example, yellow is the brightest color, and blue is the darkest shade, even in its maximum brightness.

(4) Color temperature is a relative quality, affecting human perceptions and experiences. This means that the warm colors remind us of the fire and are yellow, red, orange, on the other hand the cold colors remind us of cold things like, snow, ice, which reflect similar shades – blue, green, etc.

3. Conclusion

Graphic designers are constantly being challenged to learn and visually communicate something new and different that can influence the audience. They are trying to constantly push the viewer's understanding of the real world in different directions. And to do that they need to learn and embrace the language of visual communication.

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