

Redefinition of the Hierarchical Structure in Poster Design

Yasin Avcı¹

Abstract

Poster design is one of the most effective communication tools that transforms information into a meaningful structure on an organized surface. At the heart of this structure lies hierarchy, which guides the viewer in the order in which it should be read. In modern design practices, the profound influence of digital culture has weakened the hierarchical structure that forms this order. This section examines this structural disintegration through the concept of hierarchy erosion, examining how the hierarchical order has shifted in modern poster design, the design reasons for its disintegration, and the visual choices digital aesthetics have used to create this disintegration. The section also assesses the impact of this erosion on the communication process and offers practical design recommendations to mitigate this disintegration.

The theoretical framework explains in detail the position of hierarchy within graphic design. Typographic scale relationships, weight distribution, the guiding function of grid structures, the formation of focal areas, and layout decisions that determine readability are among the fundamental components of hierarchical structure. The integration of digital aesthetic trends with design is reshaping this structure. Experimental typographic trends, surface-intensive compositional approaches, design habits that support rapid visual consumption, and the influence of screen culture are considered among the significant factors contributing to this transformation.

During the analysis phase, selected contemporary poster examples were examined, and the reasons for hierarchical disintegration were concretely identified. Decreasing typographic scale differences reduces the power of focal orientation, loosening the use of grids reduces clarity in information sequencing, and increasing surface density hinders the separation of text areas. These results demonstrate that hierarchical erosion stems from specific design

1 Asst. Prof. Dr, Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, yavci@bandirma.edu.tr, 0000-0002-0589-6921

decisions. The chapter concludes with recommendations for scaling strategies to strengthen hierarchical order, grid-based layout decisions, compositional practices that support the separation of text areas, and typographic control mechanisms that balance digital aesthetic effects. These evaluations provide a comprehensive perspective on strengthening the communication effect in modern poster design.

1. Introduction

Although the origin of the poster, as it is defined today, is generally traced back to the 19th century, research shows that poster-like announcement tools were used in much earlier periods (Ünsal, 1984, p. 20). Throughout history, posters have been regarded as a visual medium employed to communicate with the masses and draw attention to various issues. Defined as a graphic product prepared for purposes such as promotion, advertising, or public announcement, the poster functions as a fundamental form of expression in visual communication, aiming to present information within a certain order (Harris & Ambrose, 2010, p. 203). As a design form, it has long served as an important component of both cultural production and public communication. Köylü and Akman (2024, p. 93) emphasize that Jules Cheret holds a significant place in the development of modern poster design and note that Cheret introduced a new direction to the typographic poster approach of his time by employing pictorial lithography. It is stated that the more than 1,000 posters he produced in the same period contributed to the formation of visual communication language and created an influence that extended beyond his era.

In the development of modern poster design, the influence of various art movements that shaped graphic design is evident, with Bauhaus and Art Deco standing out among them. The aesthetic and conceptual foundations established by these movements found resonance in the works of designers ranging from Jules Cheret to Milton Glaser. The vivid visual language introduced by Cheret and the distinctive interpretations brought to modern graphic expression by Glaser are considered to have made a meaningful contribution to the diversity of contemporary poster design (Pilici, 2021, p. 334). Since the information conveyed by a poster requires establishing interaction with the viewer in a short time, it is important that the visual and typographic decisions on the design surface be constructed within a coherent structure. This coherence relies on a hierarchical order that guides the viewer's eye and is thought to significantly influence the communicative power of the design.

With the development of new media environments, posters have also undergone transformation and have become more visible on technology-based

platforms. While the fundamental function of the poster has been preserved, the ways in which it reaches the audience have been reshaped through digital channels. Today, posters appear not only in printed form but also on digital screens, billboards, and smart devices in animated and interactive formats (Köksal & Aluç, 2022, p. 667). In contemporary design contexts, the growing influence of digital culture has begun to alter the nature of poster layout. The spread of digital aesthetics, the emergence of new typographic tendencies, the strengthening of screen-based visual habits, and composition principles that support rapid consumption have contributed to the weakening of the hierarchical structure that has long characterized poster design. This shift reduces the clarity of focal points on the design surface and complicates the distinction between information-bearing areas. Under these conditions, the message conveyed by the poster is perceived within a more complex structure than in the past. According to Muller-Brockmann (2010, p. 12), the poster is viewed as a communication tool that fulfills functions such as informing, guiding, and persuading, and is regarded as an indicator reflecting social, economic, political, and cultural processes

This section aims to examine the structural transformation that has emerged in modern poster design. It focuses on explaining how hierarchical order has weakened, which design choices have led to this outcome, and the role that digital aesthetics have played in the process. It also presents evaluations concerning the effects of these changes on communication and discusses how hierarchical structure may be reinforced again. The evaluations aim to identify where hierarchical structure becomes weaker in different types of posters and to reveal how this weakening influences communication. In this way, the study explores how hierarchical order can be reconstructed in alignment with contemporary design tendencies rather than being completely abandoned. The idea that the weakening of hierarchy can be reduced through the intentional use of design components such as scale, space, color, grid, and typography forms the basis of this approach. In this respect, the study provides a framework for considering possible solutions that may strengthen communicative clarity while preserving the dynamism of modern aesthetic approaches.

The change that has emerged in modern poster design is not considered solely an aesthetic transformation. The weakening of hierarchical structure results in an outcome that directly affects the fundamental function of design, which is the transmission of a message. A poster is a communication tool that needs to be understood within a short period of time, and for this reason the direction of information flow and the layout principles that guide the viewer's eye play a decisive role in its effectiveness. When hierarchical erosion occurs, this guiding power diminishes and the viewer experiences difficulty in

identifying a clear reading order on the design surface. This situation reduces the speed at which the poster is perceived and may limit the impact of the message being conveyed.

The modern era's approach is considered a transformation that transcends technological advancements and involves a radical transformation in design language. Modern posters and typefaces demonstrate that habits from the past have been replaced by an approach shaped by the needs of a new society. During this period, design was restructured not as a continuation of tradition, but rather in line with a modern theory that aimed to express thought within an aesthetic order (Tekkoç, 2023, p. 213).

Changing visual production styles influenced by digital culture create an environment that supports this erosion. Experimental typography, dense visual layers filling the surface, arrangements conveying a sense of movement, and social media-based compositional approaches transform the balance on the design surface. This transformation creates a structure that challenges the long-established informational order in posters. The viewer's attention is now dispersed across the surface rather than concentrated in a single focal point. This dispersion weakens the fundamental function of hierarchical order, namely orientation, and diminishes the power of information conveyed on the surface. In this context, examining modern poster design is considered crucial for understanding not only formal trends but also the transformation of communication structure. The primary objective of this section is to identify the causes of this dissolution in hierarchy, explain how this dissolution becomes apparent in poster design, and assess the design decisions necessary to maintain communication quality.

2. The Concept of Hierarchy and Its Position in Graphic Design

Visual hierarchy is a fundamental element used in many areas of design. As the designer arranges written or visual messages on the surface, the goal is to establish effective communication with the viewer. For this reason, design elements need to be presented with a certain order and priority (Acar & Kavuran, 2017, p. 798). To organize visual components correctly, design principles such as direction, space, balance, proportion, hierarchy, emphasis, continuity, and unity must be employed. These principles form the basis of contemporary design education and continue to maintain their importance by drawing from various disciplines (Lupton & Phillips, 2015, p. 48). Visual hierarchy emerges through the arrangement of elements such as size, shape, position, spacing, texture, color, value, and direction on the design surface (Yıldırım, Söğüt, & Sever, 2022, p. 217). As one of the key principles of visual

design, hierarchy requires presenting design elements in an order that guides the viewer's attention. Hierarchy is considered one of the most essential structural principles of graphic design and provides a guiding framework that shapes how the design will be interpreted by the viewer. This framework organizes the relationship between visual or typographic elements and clarifies the flow of information across the surface. Hierarchy consists of the decisions that determine which information will be perceived first, which element will be placed in a more prominent position, and which areas will serve a supporting function. For this reason, the communicative effectiveness of the design largely depends on the quality of its hierarchical structure.

Hierarchy has been a common principle across many movements in design history. The Modernist approach considered hierarchy a fundamental condition of order and sought to establish a clear ordering of information through typographic scale, the use of white space, and the grid system. During this period, designers such as Josef Müller-Brockmann, Herbert Bayer, and Jan Tschichold employed hierarchy as a defining tool in both typographic arrangements and poster designs. The approach known as the International Typographic Style advocated for a scientific foundation for order and developed a systematic structure that enhanced the readability of the visual surface. This understanding contributed to the long-standing positioning of poster design as an organized and understandable means of communication.

It can be assumed that the function of visual elements is changing today. In other words, the decorative use of images in the contemporary communication process is gradually decreasing, and they are shifting towards a more communication-focused function (Onursoy, 2005, p. 142). The function of hierarchy in design is not limited to a mere ordering mechanism. Thanks to the directing power it creates on the surface, the viewer's eye movement is controlled, and the information carried by the design is conveyed in a specific order. Title, subtitle, and supporting text fields form the cornerstones of this order. Size, weight, position, and color relationships also serve as supporting elements on the surface that reinforce the hierarchy. The designer determines the poster's perception speed and the impact of the message by establishing the balance between these elements. The rise of digital aesthetics in the modern design environment necessitates understanding how this hierarchical order is reshaped over time.

3. Digital Aesthetics and Modern Design Trends

Aesthetic quality is a key factor in structuring the design process of digital environments. These factors relate to the appeal and originality of the

visual message presented to users. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of the target audience when creating a visual message (Birol, 2023, p. 113). The impact of digital culture on visual production processes has become one of the fundamental elements that determines the contemporary design approach. This impact is not limited to the evolution of the tools and techniques used. It also represents a transformation process that determines the quality, rhythm, and density of the visual language the designer establishes on the surface. Digital aesthetics, particularly with the proliferation of screen-based production, has created a new visual logic in poster design. This logic develops a perception of rapidly consumed content and reshapes traditional decisions that determine the layout of the design surface.

Because aesthetic expectations in digital environments are closely linked to photo editing habits (Chae, 2017), visual preferences can be said to be shifting toward a more selective and structured structure. This suggests that users tend to create a visual identity through their posts, necessitating simpler and more effective design language solutions to align with these expectations. Interactive works in digital art, which make the viewer a part of the work, are observed to have a structure that broadens the aesthetic experience and enhances and intensifies the emotional impact (Tüzün & Atabay, 2022, p. 31). Because the majority of digitally generated images are designed to capture short-term attention, a similar behavioral model is adopted in poster design. This model leads to dense visual clusters on the surface. Bright color fields, overlapping textures, and typographic arrangements that evoke a sense of rapid movement cause the center of attention to be dispersed throughout the design. This dispersion weakens the guiding effect, the primary function of hierarchical order, and complicates the viewer's reading of the surface.

In digital art, traditional aesthetics and autonomy are being replaced by new concepts such as software, merging, hybridization, enhancement, transparency, and interactivity (Boydak, 2021, p. 144). Experimental typography practices, increasingly prevalent in modern graphic design, are also a significant part of this process. Designers, leveraging the flexibility offered by digital tools, are distorting letterforms, reducing the difference between point sizes, or creating layouts that distribute weight evenly across the surface. Expanding or contracting letterforms, opting for space that breaks standard rhythms, and creating a structure that spreads text across the surface all weaken the visibility of the hierarchical structure. This complicates the understanding of the information conveyed by the poster.

Another element that defines digital aesthetics is the fast-paced consumption practices fostered by social media culture. User behaviors encourage a layout

that activates every area of the design surface, incorporates intense visual stimuli, and aims to capture attention. This layout creates a new surface structure that moves away from the clear focal point approach used in poster design for many years. Consequently, the ordering of information in modern posters becomes less clear, reducing the design's readability.

When all these trends come together, digital aesthetics become a powerful force redefining surface organization in poster design. Unlike older poster styles, where hierarchy was strong, modern posters bring information areas closer together, visual elements carry equal weight, and the surface becomes denser. This density accelerates the erosion of the hierarchical structure.

4. Methodology

This study employed a visual content analysis method to examine specific indicators of the erosion of hierarchy in modern poster design. The method aims to uncover the structural features that enable the typographic and visual layout on the poster surface to be read. In this context, the analysis focused on the location of the fundamental components that constitute the layout on the surface, their interrelationships, and the information flow they generate. The aim is to clearly assess the impact of design decisions on the hierarchical layout.

The poster examples identified for analysis feature surface layouts that represent the contemporary design landscape and embody digital aesthetic trends. These examples were selected based on their visible shifts in typographic scale, grid usage, color and contrast relationships, and surface density. The posters were evaluated based on their structural features that highlight areas where the hierarchy is weakened.

During the evaluation process, typographic scale relationships were first examined. A decrease in font size makes it difficult to understand the order of information and weakens the cues that determine the viewer's viewing direction. Therefore, the distribution of text weight across the surface of each poster was carefully analyzed. The impact of grid structures on the design was then evaluated. In examples where the use of grids is relaxed, the scattering of information across the surface increases, eliminating the visual system that would establish a hierarchical order.

Color and contrast relationships constitute another aspect of the analysis process. Influenced by digital aesthetic trends, highly saturated colors and sharp transitions on the surface have become common. This results in a weakening of focal areas. Examining compositions with dense surfaces is also a crucial part of the study. The dense use of layers, the overlapping of

visual blocks, and the loss of clarity of text areas all indicate a disruption of the hierarchical structure.

Each poster sample was evaluated against these criteria, revealing the design decisions associated with the erosion of hierarchy. This analysis aims to explain how surface organization has evolved in modern poster design and how digital aesthetics have guided this evolution. The next section will present concrete poster analyses supporting this analysis.

5. Findings

This section examines seven different poster types: posters embodying experimental typography, surfaces featuring digital layering, designs reflecting social media aesthetics, compositions with high surface density, examples of predominant use of color and contrast, layouts with a weakened grid structure, and minimal but weakly hierarchical designs. These types provide a holistic framework that reveals the points at which hierarchical structure weakens in modern poster design.

5.1. Experimental Typography Poster

The experimental typography approach offers a structural quest that deliberately disrupts traditional reading patterns. The fragmentation of letters, the dispersion of text across the surface, and the restriction of readability form the basis of these types of posters. This approach transforms typography into a visual image, while also revealing the points at which the hierarchical order is weakened. The dissolution of the surface-guiding structure is seen as a characteristic result of this genre.

Figure 1. Experimental Typography Poster Design



Table 1. Poster Analysis Table

Poster Type	Key Feature	Hierarchy Erosion
Experimental Typography Poster	The fragmentation of letters intentionally complicates readability.	As typography transforms into visual imagery, the distinction between title and subtext disappears, weakening the relationship between the guiding scale on the surface.

The poster was designed with a surface layout that embodies the distinctive characteristics of an experimental typography approach. Typographic elements were placed fragmentedly on the surface, leaving only certain sections of the letters visible, and intentionally disrupting word integrity. When evaluated within the context of visual content analysis, these choices create a positioning that limits the readability of text areas intended to support a hierarchical structure. The dispersion of letters across the surface weakens the clear cues that determine the viewer's viewing direction. The contrast between the photograph and the orange circular form used in the poster creates a strong

focal point. However, instead of supporting this focus, the typographic structure creates additional visual focal points spreading across the surface, while the distribution of letter segments to different corners creates an effect that disrupts the typographic scale relationship. The random rhythmic placement of large-print letters on the surface relegates the communicative function of the text to the background and undermines the fundamental purpose of hierarchy: the sequencing of information. The use of color is also known to reinforce the erosion of hierarchical order. While the orange form creates a strong visual emphasis, smaller-print sections of text positioned near the same area are relegated to the background. Placing text areas over the photograph reduces readability and results in a result that limits the design's directive nature.

While this poster's experimental typography approach offers aesthetic variety, the fragmented text structure spread across the surface layout and the deliberate reduction of scale undermine the visibility of hierarchical unity. Because the design lacks a clear reading order, the viewer is forced to follow scattered signs across the surface rather than decipher the message from a single focal point, a clear example of hierarchical erosion.

5.2. Digital Layered Poster

Digital layered poster designs present a dense compositional approach created through the superimposition of multiple visual fragments. This structure, which develops through a collage-like logic, produces several focal points and visual weights that hold similar levels of emphasis. The complexity of the layers makes the reading order of the surface less clear and creates conditions in which hierarchical structure begins to weaken. For this reason, such posters are considered to reflect the influences of modern digital aesthetics in a pronounced way.

Figure 2. Digital Layered Poster Design



Table 2. Poster Analysis

Poster Type	Key Feature	Hierarchy Erosion
Digital Layered Poster	It features a dense layered structure created by superimposing multiple collage fragments.	Multiple equivalent focal points emerge, and the viewer is not directed toward a specific reading path on the surface

The work features a collage-based surface layout in which multiple visual fragments are assembled, and it is regarded as a clear example of the use of digital layering. The simultaneous presence of numerous visual elements on the surface naturally weakens the hierarchical structure that would normally guide the flow of information. The placement of independent images with equal visual weight reduces the presence of indicators that direct the viewer's

gaze toward a single focal point. Although the television screen at the center of the poster creates a strong visual emphasis, the abundance of surrounding objects diminishes the strength of this focal area. The test pattern displayed on the screen forms the central dynamic of the composition; however, the inclusion of human legs, a glass cup, a crown, a hand, a hammer, and figures facing different directions along the same axis transforms the surface into a layered structure and continuously draws the viewer's perception toward different areas. This situation reduces the clarity of hierarchical order within the design.

The color structure also presents a cohesive appearance with a layered logic. The red background creates a broad emphasis on the surface, but this emphasis does not create a hierarchical orientation. Color merely provides an overall dynamism; it does not create a structure that emphasizes the sequence of information. Furthermore, the combination of black-and-white collage elements and the brightly colored television test screen prevents the visual weight from being concentrated on a single point. The layered structure of this poster appears to reflect typical characteristics of the digital collage approach. The overlapping of visual blocks, the independent focal point of each element, and the lack of a clear reading order of the composition reinforce the erosion of hierarchy. The viewer's eye movement is dispersed across the surface, limiting the design's guiding function. Therefore, the poster can be considered a clear example of how the use of digital layers weakens hierarchical unity in modern poster design.

5.3. Poster Design in Social Media Aesthetics

Posters that reflect social media aesthetics transfer the visual behaviors of fast-consumption culture onto the design surface. Large type sizes, divided compositions, and striking color blocks are among the defining characteristics of this style. These designs, which align with the rhythm of digital platforms, create a sense of equivalence that weakens hierarchical guidance. The balanced distribution of visual and textual weight produces a structure that limits the poster's ability to direct the viewer's attention.

Figure 3. Social Media Aesthetics Poster Design



Table 3. Poster Analysis

Poster Type	Key Feature	Hierarchy Erosion
Poster Reflecting Social Media Aesthetics	Large type sizes, divided surfaces, and a digitally oriented emphasis that supports rapid perception.	Since text and visuals are presented with equal dominance, the focal point does not become clearly defined. This weakens hierarchical sequencing.

This social media poster features a surface layout that embodies the distinct characteristics of social media-based visual culture. The poster's basic structure, reflecting the rhythm of fast-paced digital content, is shaped by a vertically divided surface structure, high-contrast typography, large-font text blocks, and Instagram-like image-text proximity. This structure demonstrates a visual behavior that departs from traditional poster layouts that reinforce hierarchical orientation. The surface is divided into two main vertical areas. On the left is a black-and-white portrait with an overlying orange vertical block, while on the right is a large-font text block. These two areas create independent focal points and do not align the viewer's gaze with a single reading path. This weakens the clarity of the hierarchical order.

The large-font, multi-line structure of the text blocks reflects the emphasis logic seen in social media posts. However, this emphasis creates an effect that distributes weight evenly across the surface rather than reinforcing the traditional hierarchy based on typographic scale. The equal dominance of each line of the phrase “None But Ourselves Can Free Our Minds” eliminates the distinction between title and subtext, creating a structure that limits hierarchical direction. The orange circular form used in the poster and the orange vertical block positioned above the portrait create a color-based emphasis area, but this emphasis does not create a direction that supports the sequencing of information. Color merely establishes a striking visual rhythm and complements the logic of rapid perception in social media content. Instead of reinforcing the hierarchical structure, this creates multiple focal points on the surface.

Partial overflow of text onto the photograph and the merging of letters with images are typical characteristics of social media aesthetics. This merging blurs layer boundaries and makes it difficult to clearly read the text. Thus, the text-driven guiding function of the hierarchical order is limited. The poster stands as a clear example of how the aesthetic behaviors of social media culture are carried onto the poster surface and where these behaviors weaken the hierarchical order. The evenly weighted distribution of focus on the surface, the balancing of the typographic scale, and the visual density created by the combination of image and text clearly demonstrate how the erosion of hierarchy develops under the influence of social media.

5.4. Modern Poster with Increased Surface Density

Posters based on surface density are notable for their designs, which incorporate numerous elements and create a distinct visual imprint. In this style, the surface is completely filled with dense, layered information. Density hinders focus and prevents the viewer from finding a clear reading path on the surface. This is one of the most rapid erosions of hierarchical order.

Şekil 4. Figure 4. Poster Design with Increased Surface Density



Table 4. Poster Analysis Table

Poster Type	Key Feature	Hierarchy Erosion
Poster with Increased Surface Density	The surface is filled with numerous elements placed in a compressed manner.	The visual crowding prevents focus; scale, spacing, and directional guidance lose their function, and the surface turns into a single dense mass.

The work is a typical example of a compositional approach characterized by excessive surface density. The overall design presents a dense structure created by the overlapping of numerous texts in colorful blocks. The small print and close proximity of the texts create visual noise that undermines the poster’s fundamental hierarchical orientation. The haphazard proliferation of numerous news items, headlines, and keywords in the background makes it difficult for the viewer to find a specific reading path on the surface. The

surface distribution significantly limits the function of the hierarchy that should support informational areas. Each text element appears at the same level of prominence, which constantly diverts the viewer's attention across the surface rather than focusing on a single focal point. The large black typographic form used in the poster aims to create a dominant structure within a dense surface, but filling it entirely with small colored text weakens the intended focal effect. While the uppercase letterform establishes a boundary on the surface, the dense layer of text within blurs this boundary. This blurring diminishes the visibility of the information priority defined by the hierarchical order. There is also a distinct intensity in the use of color. Presenting text blocks in different colors creates a visual movement on the surface, but this movement does not serve a directive function. Because there is no priority relationship between colors, the viewer cannot perceive any information area as more dominant than others. This poster clearly demonstrates how hierarchical order dissolves as surface density increases. The convergence of numerous texts, the disappearance of scale, and the loss of color's guiding function are clear examples of the surface-density-based form of hierarchical erosion. This visual pressure throughout the design leads the viewer to perceive only a dense mass of information rather than read the surface.

5.5. Experimental Color and Contrast Poster

Posters that emphasize color and contrast excessively present a structure that distributes visual energy evenly across the surface. Bright blocks of color and high-contrast relationships repel traditional hierarchical emphasis. Rather than focusing the viewer's attention on a single area, these designs create a dispersed movement across the surface. Thus, the use of color becomes a key visual element affecting the hierarchical order.

Figure 5. You Can't You Want Poster Design



Table 5. Analysis Table of the “You Can’t You Want” Poster

Poster Type	Key Feature	Hierarchy Erosion
Poster Dominated by Color and Contrast	High saturation, strong contrast, and large color blocks show its effect.	Color dominates the entire surface, suppressing hierarchical emphasis. Typography fades into the background, and orientation is lost.

The poster presents a striking structure with its use of hyper-saturated color and high contrast on the surface. Rather than establishing a hierarchical structure that directs the viewer’s attention to a single point, the bright pink background, pervaded by a turquoise block, literally blankets the surface with a saturated color effect. This approach creates a powerful visual pressure that limits the focus provided by the hierarchical order.

The pink and turquoise hues of the photographic element cancel out the image’s natural light values and make it difficult for the figure to serve as a focal point, directing the surface. Because the contrast on the surface is used equally for both text and image, no element is elevated to a hierarchical priority. The mannequin figure placed on the turquoise block also loses its color intensity, and a clear sequence that determines the viewer’s viewing direction is not established. Typography, again through the color-mixing effect, becomes

evident as a significant component of this loss of hierarchical order. The phrases “You Can’t” and “You Want” are presented in large fonts, but because they have a similar contrast value to the background, they blend into the surface and do not create a distinct focal point. The compression of text between pink and turquoise gradients relegates the textual areas to the background and weakens the reading rhythm. This structure, dominated by color, creates a visual density that constantly draws the viewer’s attention around the surface rather than designing a progressive reading order. Excessive color saturation diminishes the function of the principles of scale, space, and contrast that underpin the hierarchical order. Because photography, typography, and figures all have equal color weight, the hierarchical orientation is almost completely dissolved. The design clearly demonstrates how the use of color in the modern digital design environment can erode hierarchy. Color intensity makes the design surface shine as a unified whole, while relegating informational areas to the background, resulting in a poster’s guiding nature.

5.6. Posters with Weakened Grid Structure

Posters that loosen or completely abandon the grid system present a structure that significantly weakens the surface’s guiding function. The loss of horizontal and vertical lines that define the layout results in a free distribution of elements. This, in turn, obscures the hierarchical structure that classifies and orders information. The lack of a grid creates a haphazard compositional effect on the surface.

Figure 6. *The Rules of Graphic Design Poster*Table 6. *“The Rules of Graphic Design” Poster Analysis*

Poster Type	Key Feature	Hierarchy Erosion
Poster with Weakened Grid Structure	Absence of structural lines and free placement of elements.	Since no relational order is established between elements, the sequence of information collapses, and the surface turns into a randomly scattered composition.

The poster presents a composition in which the traditional grid system is largely abandoned, and the structural lines that guide the surface layout become almost completely invisible. The weakening of the grid’s guiding function allows all elements in the poster to be positioned freely on the surface, diminishing the clarity of the hierarchical order. The design interweaves typographic elements with collage-like visuals. The phrase “The Rules of

Graphic Design” has become fragmented, tilted in different directions, and inconsistent in scale. The overlapping letters and their scattered distribution on the surface undermine an orderly sequence of information. Because the boundaries between typography and visual elements are unclear, a flow that guides the viewer’s eye is absent. The seemingly haphazard placement of visual elements on the surface is also a clear consequence of the grid’s weakness. Various icons, symbols, vehicle illustrations, and organic drawings are presented on the same plane with similar weights. This prevents the creation of a focal point on the surface. Each element generates a point of attention within itself, but because there is no relational structure to establish order among these points, hierarchical guidance is not achieved. The use of color also enhances the effect of the absence of a grid. Orange typography carries the same level of visual weight as black collage elements. This color-text relationship creates an equivalence that limits the design’s directive potential. The dominant use of orange in typography does not produce the intended direction because the fragmented structure of the letters and the irregularity of their positioning prevent them from creating emphasis.

It’s a clear example of how the weakening of the grid structure leads to the dissolution of hierarchical order. The absence of the grid pushes every element on the surface to the same plane, significantly diminishing information order and readability. Instead of a guiding order, the surface presents a disorganized structure composed of multiple independent foci, making the grid-based form of hierarchical erosion clearly visible.

5.7. Minimal Posters with Weak Hierarchy

Despite their simple structure, minimal posters require a strong hierarchy, but in some cases, this hierarchical order is not sufficiently established. Using a small number of elements can make it difficult to clarify surface priority relationships. When visual and typographic elements gain equal weight, the minimal approach loses its guiding effect. Such posters demonstrate that simplicity does not guarantee hierarchical clarity.

Figure 7. The Kid Film Poster



Table 7. The Kid Poster Analysis

Poster Type	Key Feature	Hierarchy Erosion
Minimal Poster with Weak Hierarchy	Use of few elements and a simple surface layout.	When scale and priority cannot be clearly established among the limited elements, directional guidance becomes weak. Minimalism struggles to support hierarchical structure.

The work presents a simple surface layout that embodies the fundamental characteristics of a minimal approach. The reduction of visual density and the use of only a few symbolic elements are hallmarks of minimalism. However, this simplicity can limit the guiding effect of the surface in situations where a strong hierarchical order is not established. This poster exhibits a similar structure. The design features two main, scaled elements. The relationship between the large bowler hat and the cane-shaped line at the bottom creates an iconic unity. The symbolic value of the hat and cane supports the visual identity of Chaplin's character. However, the equal weight of these two large forms on the surface does not create a clear focal point that would direct the viewer's gaze. Despite the use of a minimal language, hierarchical priority is unclear.

The figure and child silhouette form the narrative center of the poster. However, the dominant presence of the hat in terms of scale and the broad horizontal structure of the cane line relegate the hierarchical emphasis of the figures to the background. While the figures possess high symbolic value, their visual primacy is overshadowed by the larger forms. Thus, hierarchical erosion within minimalism emerges. The typographic structure produces a similar effect. Although the title "*The Kid*" is positioned at the top, the scale and position of the text do not create a dominant focus on the surface. The space between the title and the visual elements creates an effect that layers the surface rather than establishes a hierarchical connection. The viewer struggles to find a guiding rhythm between the title, the iconic hat, and the figures. While the primary goal of minimal design is to eliminate visual redundancy, this simplification in this poster has not strengthened hierarchical clarity, and its clear directional function remains limited. The balance of power between large symbolic forms and narrative figures has been equalized, weakening the hierarchy between typography and visual elements. This situation provides an example of how minimal, yet weakly hierarchical, poster design paves the way for the erosion of hierarchy.

6. Conclusion

Various trends indicating a weakening of the hierarchical structure in modern poster design are evident in the analyzed studies. The seven poster types examined suggest that this change manifests itself in different ways. Factors such as the fragmentation of typography, increased layer density, the infusion of digital aesthetic trends onto the surface, the intense use of color saturation, the loosening of the grid system, and the weakening of scale in the minimal approach can all impact the clarity of the hierarchical order to varying degrees. Therefore, it can be argued that this erosion is not tied to

a single design approach but rather develops within a diversity related to current visual practices.

In experimental typography examples, transforming text into a visual element can slow down the communication process. In such works, strengthening the scale difference and supporting experimental applications with a more directive structure can help reduce dissociation. In digital layered posters, the equal weight of multiple image elements can weaken message integrity; reducing layer density and creating a singular focal point can offer an approach that supports communication. In examples embodying social media aesthetics, large typography and fragmented surfaces can hinder focus. Scaling decisions that clarify the text-image relationship can highlight the hierarchical order. In posters with increased surface density, information overload can create reading difficulties for the viewer; in this case, a design approach that reduces content and increases the use of white space can contribute to the solution. In designs dominated by color and contrast, color energy can spread evenly across the surface, obscuring the hierarchical emphasis. Balancing saturation and using contrast with a directive function can enhance communication. In posters where the grid system is weakened, loosening the layout can limit readability; reintroducing the grid in a flexible but distinct manner can result in a hierarchical structure. In examples where a minimal approach is evident but the hierarchy remains weak, establishing more distinct scale relationships among a small number of elements and emphasizing a singular focal point can strengthen the design.

The evaluations indicate that hierarchical erosion does not manifest uniformly across all poster types, but can manifest in different ways depending on the design choices used. Suggestions for strengthening the hierarchical order can contribute to more informed decision-making during the design process.

References

- Acar, H. M., & Kavuran, T. (2017). Sayfa tasarımında hiyerarşik düzen: Mersin’de günlük yayın yapan yerel gazeteler üzerine bir değerlendirme. *Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences Research*, 4(12), 798-805.
- Birol, E. (2023). Türkiye’de en çok ziyaret edilen pazaryeri web sitelerinin görsel tasarım süreci. *İnifE- Dergi*, 8(1), 107-131.
- Boydak, B. (2021). Postmodern kültür ve teknolojinin etkileşimi: Post-dijital sanatta estetik. In *Proceedings Book 2 of the International Conference on Digital Transformation in Social Sciences* (s. 139-149). İstanbul: Beyken Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Chae, J. (2017). Virtual makeover: Selfie-taking and social media use increase selfie-editing frequency through social comparison. *Computers in Human Behavior*(66), 370-376.
- Harris, P., & Ambrose, G. (2010). *Görsel grafik tasarım sözlüğü*. (B. Barhana, Trans.) İstanbul: Literatür Yayıncılık.
- Ünsal, Y. (1984). *Bilimsel reklam ve pazarlamadaki yeri*. İstanbul : Tivi Teklam Yayınları.
- Köksal, F. N., & Aluç, E. (2022). Genelekselden dijitale evrilen bir medya olarak afiş. *The Turkish Online Journal of Design, Art and Communication*, 12(3), 666-681.
- Köylü, A. Ö., & Akman, M. (2024). Gelenekselden dijitale basılı grafik ürünlerin yolculuğu: Afiş, broşür, bilet ve kitap örneği. *Sanat&Tasarım Dergisi*, 15(1), 83-103.
- Lupton, E., & Phillips, J. C. (2015). *Graphic design: The new basics*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Muller-Brockmann, J., & Müller-Brockmann, S. (2010). *History of the poster*. London: Phaidon Press Limited.
- Onursoy, S. (2005). Gazetelerde görsel tasarım yanlılığı. *Journal of Selcuk Communication*, 3(4), 142-151.
- Pilici, E. (2021). Postmodern reklam afişi tasarımı. *Pearson Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 6(11), 329-342.
- Tüzün, M., & Atabay, D. (2022). Dijital sanatta estetik deneyim: Chris Milk. *The Journal of Social Sciences*(61), 27-34.
- Tekkoç, A. V. (2023). Modern çağda düşüncenin değişimi ve 20. yüzyılın ilk yarısında afiş tasarımlarına etkileri. *Aydın Sanat*, 9(18), 209-227.
- Yıldırım, B., Söğüt, M. A., & Sever, İ. A. (2022). Tasarım-görsel algı ilişkisinde dijital çağ etkisi ve psikolojik yansımaları. *Tasarım Mimarlık ve Mühendislik Dergisi*, 2(3), 214-228.

Visual Sources

Visual Source 1- <https://l24.im/SVjus>

Visual Source 2- <https://l24.im/ef7npyi>

Visual Source 3- <https://l24.im/QxuYe>

Visual Source 4- <https://l24.im/tXSagyT>

Visual Source 5- <https://l24.im/inXU1>

Visual Source 6- <https://l24.im/1zchG6>

Visual Source 7- <https://l24.im/0aUq2Fu>

