Do we define the Grid or does it define our design?

By

Maria Qureshi
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This Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment to the requirements for the degree of BACHELOR OF COMMUNICATION DESIGN, from Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture.

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INDUS VALLEY SCHOOL OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE
KARACHI PAKISTAN
2012
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Mahroosh Haider for being the most encouraging dissertation advisor, for her constant guidance and patience and most of all for her undying faith in me throughout the course of this research. Gemma Sharpe for being so efficient and meticulous in teaching us about formatting and taking out the time to correct the most common errors a hundred times over. Sohail Zuberi for aiding me in my research and having the patience to hear me think aloud about different aspects of my dissertation.

Last but not least, I’d like to thank all the people that were interviewed during the course of my research for their time and patience.
ABSTRACT

To find beauty in order is something that comes as second nature to most if not all individuals. This dissertation investigates the importance of the grid in the world of visual communication, whether we define it or if it in fact defines our design. Delving into the evolution of the grid throughout the course of history, keeping significant design movements in mind, one comes to observe the evolved state of the grid in present day design. A secondary to the question at hand investigates the importance of the grid in the design process. After careful research it is evident that there are three main kinds of designers with reference to the topic at hand. The aim of this dissertation is to further investigate the statements/ opinions on the grid. A combination of primary and secondary data in the form of existing articles and interviews conducted firsthand form the basis of the research, giving a view of the importance of the grid in western societies and an international community, juxtaposed with the use of the grid in a local design hub like Karachi, Pakistan.
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INTRODUCTION

To attempt to bring about order in an unorganised environment is a default setting that most individuals are programmed to. Just as one would set about to maintain order while doing something as trivial as tidying a room, the same logic can be applied to design. While one would make use of physical exertion in the tedious process of organizing a space, a designer would mentally exert themselves in trying to organize a design. During the process of organizing ones surroundings, an individual has the ability to step back and assess what needs to go where. Similarly during the design process, a designer would use a grid to lay out all their elements and assess what composition would result in a cohesive, effective and beautiful design.

In itself the word grid brings to mind restriction, orderliness and severity, thought counter to that it may to some bring forth a framework to build upon, a guide or perhaps even the boundary which they are to transgress. The question poised at the tip of my tongue while the synapses fire away in my brain, is this, and how is one to deliberate with finesse the complexity posed of something so basic and simple? It should be a single word answer; does it limit oneself or help us push through the rudimentary design? But the layer upon layer of time and honing of the Grid\(^1\) makes this a predicament worth pondering.

The grid, to some seems to be a tool to aid the process of design, making it organized and effective, where as to others it is an obstruction to design and impedes creativity.

\(^1\) a network of horizontal and vertical lines that provide coordinates for locating points on an image - as per the definition of the grid from the website \url{http://www.thefreedictionary.com/grid}
Yet it can be noted that the grid is an essential part to almost all kinds of designers, it has been rooted in the foundations of one’s learning. However one may also ponder over the reason designers have been making use of a grid, whether it be in its most basic form, to impose some kind of order to their design, or perhaps in fact to attempt to gain control of some aspect in their lives. In the words of Le Corbusier\(^2\)

“Man walks in a straight line because he has a goal and knows where he is going ...”

Extracted from his book The City of Tomorrow published in 1924, it can be gathered that in our scattered and unorganized lives, we as humans can only hope to attain some control over things by chalking out the parameters, making plans, and organizing. As art and design are an expression of oneself in regards to society and individual surroundings, the use of the grid to some degree seems to be a way for designers to organize their thoughts and actions visually.

“A chaotic world in which parameters are always changing, a need for control without being controlled, a desire to find beauty and truth, vast quantities of words and images that need to be placed on a page.”\(^3\)

\(^2\) Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier; October 6, 1887 – August 27, 1965), was an architect, designer, urbanist and writer, famous for being one of the pioneers of what is now called modern architecture—extracted from the website http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Corbusier

\(^3\) Book title: The Designer and the Grid
Authors: Lucienne Roberts and Julia Thrift
Published in: 2002
LITERATURE REVIEW

The History and Evolution of the Grid

The grid has come a long way in its evolution, a process that began even before the existence of the grid itself was acknowledged or a name established for it in our consciousness. Something akin to the Freudian establishment of oneself, or Durkheim’s consciousness and formation of ‘I’, wherein it was allowed to grow under the socialization allowed.

The Grid has maintained its integrity as a benefactor of order amidst the chaos of design and grown with influences acting upon it that increased its flexibility and numerical ratios to the level where it has arrived today. It was not till the mid twentieth century that the existence of the grid was recognized, though the functionality of the grid had been in use for over 500 years in text, religious and biblical works being the primary productions. While the earlier manuscripts presented

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4 Sigmund Freud was an Austrian neurologist who founded the discipline of psychoanalysis. An early neurological researcher into cerebral palsy, aphasia and microscopic neuroanatomy, Freud later developed theories about the unconscious mind and the mechanism of repression, and established the field of verbal psychotherapy by creating psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology through dialogue between a patient and a psychoanalyst. – extracted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Freud

5 David Émile Durkheim (April 15, 1858 – November 15, 1917) was a French sociologist. He formally established the academic discipline and, with Karl Marx and Max Weber, is commonly cited as the principal architect of modern social science and father of sociology – extracted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89mile_Durkheim

6 Regarding the society itself, like social institutions in general, Durkheim saw it as a set of social facts. Even more than "what society is", Durkheim was interested in answering "how is a society created" and "what holds a society together". In his Division of Labor in Society, Durkheim attempted to answer the question of what holds the society together. He assumes that humans are inherently egoistic, but norms, beliefs and values (collective consciousness) form the moral basis of the society, resulting in social integration – extracted from article – "Durkheim's Thought – Society, Collective consciousness and thought ” Source:http://test.mathepedia.de/Emile_Durkheim/Durkheim_38_3539_59s_thought/Society_44_collective_consciousness_and.aspx
an outlook fascinatingly close to mirroring the modern, their conventional format was based heavily on symmetry, which found itself challenged with the establishment of justified setting.

‘This spread from The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, published in 1792, uses the golden section to determine the text area, and the Fibonacci sequence to arrive at relative margin sizes (inner margin 3 units; top and outer margins 5 units; bottom margin 8 units).’

A new layer had been added to the grid on its way to be found and increased its facets of utility. On its way the industrial revolution brought about a new interest in design, and by the late 1800’s, contemporary designers began to explore new ways of working around problems with theoretical solutions. By the early twentieth century the demand for more than just type facing and books was hailed and complex imaging and photographs were incorporated. Mass production called for literature being produced that was not limited to conventional design.

During WWII, and in the decades that followed, these ideas coalesced into a coherent design manifesto with a new design device at its core—the grid.

‘The work produced by William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement may appear very different from that of modernism, Arts and Crafts was its forerunner in

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7 Article: A Brief History of Grids
Author: Lucienne Roberts
Published: March 18 2008
Source: http://www.graphics.com/modules.php?name=Sections&op=viewarticle&artid=620
one important respect. Morris believed that form and function were inextricably entwined. Running almost concurrently with these ideas were the revolutionary cubist experiments of Picasso and Braque, who were exploring how to represent 3-D forms on 2-D planes, producing increasingly abstract results. Artists, and then designers, were influenced by this work, and re-evaluated composition as a result.¹⁸

As old fundamentals were pushed and made to yield to new more voracious concepts, the development of the Grid continued. Modern and futuristic Art movements such as futurism, Dadaism, surrealism, constructivism, suprematism, and expressionism emboldened the rise of chaotic works which challenged the rational and logic of the grid and used space as a dynamic.³ but this iconoclastic development also brought about the emergence of works calling for more convention to be applied; ‘… it opened the door to de Stijl, the Bauhaus, and typographers like Herbert Bayer and Jan Tschichold, who called for some order to be imposed on what seemed like fractured chaos.’⁹

‘The movement de Stijl was founded by Theo van Doesburg, Dutch architect, designer, and painter. It explored form as determined by function, and placed this in a political context. Its members advocated minimalism, using only rectilinear forms, and removing the surface decoration other than as a by-product of a limited colour palette: the primaries plus black and white’

¹⁸ Article : A Brief History of Grids

⁹ Article : A Brief History of Grids
Author : Lucienne Roberts
Published : March 18 2008
Source : http://www.graphics.com/modules.php?name=Sections&op=viewarticle&artid=620
The contribution to the development of the grid was and is a global phenomenon. Amidst the times of war and rationing the grid flourished in Swiss graphic design, and there came a point where the two were synonymous. ‘Several post-War Swiss designers are the best-known exponents of the grid. Moving further to the grid in the here and now as we call it, it’s been established for use not just in the print but incorporated in the design of webpages and structures as was propounded by the Bauhaus school of thought, the institution itself founded by the architect Walter Gropius as its Director. His belief that architecture, graphic art, industrial design, painting, sculpture, and so on were all interrelated had a profound impact on the development of typography and graphic design.

The Principle of the Grid

A grid is a series of verticals and horizontals that subdivide a page into units of space, which in turn hold typography and images. The main purpose of using a grid is to make the process of designing easier, faster and more effective, taking into account not only the cohesiveness of a design but also the beauty of design. Using a grid is not just about lining things up but it makes use of proportion as well. Designers today credit Piet Mondrian\(^\text{10}\) for his sophisticated use of the grid; however the grid has origins in the mathematical theory of the Pythagoras theorem\(^\text{11}\) and is originally derived from the Golden mean\(^\text{12}\). The grid is seen as one of the fundamentals of

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\(^{10}\) "Piet" Mondrian; March 7, 1872 – February 1, 1944), was a Dutch painter. He was an important contributor to the De Stijl art movement and group – extracted from [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/389102/Piet-Mondrian](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/389102/Piet-Mondrian)

\(^{11}\) In mathematics, the Pythagorean Theorem or Pythagoras' theorem is a relation in Euclidean geometry among the three sides of a right triangle (right-angled triangle) – extracted from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pythagorean_theorem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pythagorean_theorem)

\(^{12}\) In mathematics and the arts, two quantities are in the golden ratio if the ratio of the sum of the quantities to the larger quantity is equal to the ratio of the larger quantity to the smaller one.
design and has been taught to every design student to be an integral part of the design process. However a majority of designers choose to now shun the grid calling it “restricting” and that they “impede creativity”\textsuperscript{13}. Though some feel strongly about the uselessness of the grid there are in fact many counter arguments to these statements. In the words of Joseph Muller Brockmann\textsuperscript{14}, “The grid system is an aid, not a guarantee. It permits a number of possible uses and each designer can look for a solution appropriate to his personal style. But one must learn how to use the grid; it is an art that requires practice.” Similarly Ellen Lupton\textsuperscript{15} states “To say a grid is limiting is to say that language is limiting, or typography is limiting.”

Apart from learning to use the grid as an apparatus to organize design, it also is a means by where the designer can express his/herself. For instance Ray Roberts in “The Principle of the Grid” mentions Jan Tschiholds work and concludes by drawing parallels between the designers highly systemized work and the rigidly ordered Fascist government.

\textsuperscript{13} Article : Myths and misconceptions about Grid systems
Author : Antonio Carusone
Published : November 30th 2009

\textsuperscript{14} Josef Müller-Brockmann, (May 9, 1914, in Rapperswil – August 30, 1996), was a Swiss graphic designer and teacher. Extracted from - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josef_M%C3%BCller-Brockmann

\textsuperscript{15} Born in 1963, Ellen Lupton is a graphic designer, writer, curator, and educator.- extracted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellen_Lupton
The Psychology of the grid

Analytical psychotherapist Jason Wright provides an insight into the psychology of the grid\(^{16}\), where he explains that the grid provides a sense of order and temporary respite from the pressing and basic human fears and dilemmas. So perhaps designers who are “obsessive” about using the grid are actually dealing with some issues that they might be having. It can be seen that Grids are fundamentally about bringing order to a page and are a way of thinking; some designers enjoy having the ability to control a page, thereby allowing them to control certain aspects of their lives.

The Grid in the Design Process

In the words of Joseph Muller Brockmann “The grid system is an aid, not a guarantee.

Similarly Ellen Lupton states “To say a grid is limiting is to say that language is limiting, or typography is limiting.”

Looking cohesively at both sets of perceptions, the question arises of the importance of the grid in the functionality of design. Do we give the grid as much importance as we were once taught to? Or is the grid truly overrated?

To shed some light on the above mentioned questions, Eric Miller in his article “How to Use the Grid System in Graphic Design”\(^{17}\) states

\(^{16}\) Book : The Designer and the Grid
Author : Lucienne Roberts and Julia Thrift
Published : 2002

\(^{17}\) Article : How to use the grid system in Graphic Design
Author : Eric Miller
Source : [http://graphicdesign.about.com/od/layout/a/grid_system.htm](http://graphicdesign.about.com/od/layout/a/grid_system.htm)
“Once the grid is established, it is up to the designer when and how to break out of it. This doesn’t mean the grid system in graphic design will be completely ignored. Instead, elements may cross over from column to column, extend to the end of the page, or extend onto adjacent pages. Breaking out of the grid can lead to the most interesting page designs.”

Hence it can be derived that the grid is always present in design but it is up to the designer to what extent he/she uses it. It is interesting to keep in mind that each individual is unique and would have a different approach to handling certain design environments, Thus formulating my question of research, does the grid define our design or do we define the grid?

Generally the utility of grids is seen through their use, but some designers in order to demonstrate the gird as more than just utility have exposed the workings to be also of beauty. Once visible, the precision of the grid acts as evidence of design credibility, and its purity of form have a mystical draw. Noted example- Dutch designer Wim Crouwel is known for his exploration and experimentation with grids. In his poster for the Vormgevers exhibition in 1968, he made the grid visible. This device then formed the basis not only for the layout, but also for the lettering of “The Grid Made Visible.”

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18 Willem Hendrik (Wim) Crouwel (Groningen, 1928) is a Dutch graphic designer and typographer. Between 1947 and 1949 he studied Fine Arts at Academie Minerva in Groningen, The Netherlands. In addition to that, he studied typography at what is now the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. - extracted from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wim_Crouwel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wim_Crouwel)

19 Article : The Grid Made Visible
Author : Wim Crouwel
Whether acknowledged or not it has been elemental in the establishment of order and symmetry for design, providing stability. This is regardless of whether the grid is consciously implemented. The pattern follows through in order to avoid chaos.

**A Matter of Preference?**

The grid has evolved to the present day level based on the needs of the design; the design has not evolved on the needs of the grid. The relationship has been symbiotic as both have evolved to benefit one another. Design has pushed the grid to its limit of flexibility, whereas the grid has been honed by time and multiple art movements to accommodate design in innumerable facets. However the grid is still, beyond all this felt to be static and introduce monotony in design, the framework applied may not always accommodate the scope of the design, stifling the creative exuberance.

With the emergence of modernist design, designers began flooding mathematically grid felt that more subjective and personal creativity of design was more favourable than that of a grid based design.

Peter Anderson questions the use of the grid; he goes on to call it a mere “Safety Net” which is irrelevant in the process of design. Anderson went on to state that the grid
has “had its day “and designers will revert back to nature as the order the grid
provided is just a passing phase.\textsuperscript{20}

Many designers still prefer to use the grid as only a basic outline, whether visible in
their work or not, this may also be because of a lack of understanding of nuances of
the grid, or just the predisposition in belief that it is restricting.

Most articles reviewed emphasized on the evolution of the grid and the incorporation
of designer personalization, to each designer there is a framework that they ascribe.
With the personalization, one can just visualise the grid and create a layout without
drawing it every single time. The controlling of composition is another ability linked
to the personalization, if we skew the grid a little bit, we can come up with more
dynamic design while still maintaining proper spacing and margins.

However what it boils down to seems to be a matter of preference, even though some
designers may use the grid, they don’t necessarily enjoy it. Vaughan Oliver almost
never uses the grid because of the line of work and design he is in, however when
asked to design a book for his own work he used a grid but stated “it wasn’t enjoyable
for me “.\textsuperscript{21}

Many designers still prefer to use the grid as only a basic outline, whether visible in
their work or not, this may also be because of a lack of understanding of nuances of
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\textsuperscript{20} Book Title : The Designer and the Grid
Author : Lucienne Roberts and Julia Thrift
Published :2002

\textsuperscript{21} Book Title :The Designer and the Grid
Authors : Lucienne Roberts and Julia Thrift
Published in : 2002
Another stance to the use of the grid is that perhaps there are two types of designers, those who see the grid as restricting and then those who see them as flexible and as an elegant solution to design problems.
There are two types of knowledge that one may attain. Those being acquired knowledge and informed knowledge. These fall into the category of primary and secondary data respectively.

Informed knowledge is attained through secondary research meaning, it is attained through already existing sources and literatures. Where one analyses already existing research and derives one’s own opinion from it. The section labelled “Literature Review” is where Secondary research on the topic at hand has been utilized. Exploration of different articles, books and theories have been taken into account and then further broken down and analysed in order to gain insight into the importance of the grid in society and design.

Acquired knowledge is information attained via first hand research. This is also known as primary research. Where an individual conducts field research on his/her topic of exploration and the findings are classified as their own.

Primary research may be in the form of Qualitative and Quantitative data.

Qualitative data exists through means /avenues of first hand interviews, surveys and questionnaires that are open ended and require the participant to provide their opinion and feedback on a particular topic. Quantitative data on the other hand usually

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22 Qualitative methods are ways of collecting data which are concerned with describing meaning, rather than with drawing statistical inferences. What qualitative methods (e.g. case studies and interviews) lose on reliability they gain in terms of validity. They provide a more in depth and rich description. – extracted from [http://www.holah.karoo.net/quantitativequalitative.htm](http://www.holah.karoo.net/quantitativequalitative.htm)

23 Quantitative methods (e.g. experiments, questionnaires and psychometric tests) provide information which is easy to analyse statistically and fairly reliable. Extracted from - [http://www.holah.karoo.net/quantitativequalitative.htm](http://www.holah.karoo.net/quantitativequalitative.htm)
consists of closed questionnaires which require simply a yes or no answer in order to provide statistical data on a topic of research.

Throughout the course of my research I will make use of both quantitative and qualitative data.

**Quantitative data:**

Quantitative data will be achieved in the form of surveys taken from a cross section of designers ranging from the age group 19 to 30. The survey will be in the form of a closed ended questionnaire requiring yes or no answers. This will be just to scratch the surface of research of who uses a grid and to define its importance in terms of age groups and professional / educational classification.

**Qualitative data:**

Qualitative data will be achieved in the form of structured and unstructured interviews, where I will interview individuals from different stages in their design life, i.e.: students, fresh graduates, slightly experienced designers and experienced designers.

Choosing to interview designers at every stage of their design journey is a very conscious decision as it will help to derive an answer on where the grid is most applicable , whether it is just a necessity for the sake of pleasing one's teacher’s , a force of habit or whether the grid is actually an aid in the design process.

These designers will have their fair share of experience, not just in design but also in the commercial and professional world. This in turn will allow me to analyse the
importance of the grid in terms of demographics, culture, values and norms as well as the varying evolution of design trends.

The subjects of my interviews are varying in terms of expertise and experience. The interviews will start with interviewing a student from the Art school of Indus Valley (IVS). Saad Saif, currently in his fourth year of education in the department of communication design, interviewing him will give an idea of how important a grid is in the education process, whether students use it as a foundation in their designs or whether they prefer to just not use it.

Osama Khalid a fresh graduate, also from IVS, currently working at Interflow, will provide insight on the transition between a school and work environment. Focusing more on the quality of designs, I intend to find out just how much importance the grid is given in a professional environment and how the fresh graduate copes with this transition.

Ahsan Abbass, a designer at the design house Inspurate, is not a fresh graduate, nor is he extremely experienced in the commercial world. It will be interesting to find out his view on the importance of the grid in design, now that he has a moderate level of experience, whether he can cope without the grid or if it is a vital part of his design process.

Imran Mir, a well-known designer in Pakistan, CEO of the advertising agency Circuit, he is experienced in the field of design and has not only worked with many people in Pakistan but also worked abroad with the renowned designer Milton Glaser24. To

interview him would enhance my knowledge and the content of this paper in terms of Pakistani design, and a comparison to Foreign influences in the world of design.

Interviewing other designers such as Tasneem Dara Khan, Director of Operations of the advertising agency Manhattan will provide insight on the importance of the grid to commercial adverts, what kind of a grid is best for public viewing of designs and how the audience takes to different layouts.

**Case studies:**

To gain a deeper understanding on the use and importance of the grid to design, a case study in the form of participant observation will be carried out over the course of two weeks. During this time it is intended that a more in depth analyses and conclusion may be reached through this method of research. Coming into contact with designers at an agency will enable me to see first-hand the use of the grid in design projects for different Medias such as print, television and web.

It will also provide insight to observing how designers work on a commercial level, as opposed to working for one’s self, the importance of using a grid, how innovative it makes a design or on the contrary how it restricts a design.
Draw backs:

Although qualitative data has many advantages such as being able to assess not only the content of the interview but also get a more in depth analysis from the subject of interview about the topic at hand, there are also certain setbacks that one may face. For instance the subject may not agree with your topic of research and thus not give you the substantial amount of information you may need. In some cases the subject of interview may completely demoralize you because he/she does not agree with your research topic. Though there are many other issues one can face in acquiring data, a likely obstacle one may incur is that while interviewing, the person taking the interview might ask questions that might direct the subject to a certain path in answering, for instance asking questions such as “Wouldn’t you agree….” will direct the subject of interview to agree with the statement being put forward. However this is not always the case, but it is something one must keep in mind.

Throughout the course of my research so far, I have interviewed quite a few designers and although my aim is to find out the importance of the grid to their designs and lives, I feel that some of them agree to the grid being important because it is just something they have been taught to be important. I also believe that in a way it is a bit of peer pressure or designer pressure that does exist in the world of design, that people who do not use the grid cannot possibly have a well-executed design. It is interesting to note that in the west this so called peer pressure works in the reverse order as per articles I have read on the basis of secondary data have implied that designers like to say they don’t use the grid because other designers mock them for having a restricted design.
The content of my research is following a very anthropological as well as sociological stance. Where it is important to take into account not only the content of research questions but the demographics of a certain situation, which include time, people, attitudes and passing/existing design trends. In my literature review there were certain theories put forward which I also aim to address in my findings and analysis, and in order to address those and get a clearer picture it is imperative to observe the entire situation.
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The Grid as a fundamental of Design

“The grid is the base and framework on which all design rests” states renowned designer/artist Imran Mir. Similarly, “The grid is an important and useful tool that all good designers make use of”, Osama Khalid from Interflow states that the grid is an important part of his design process as not only does it help in organizing things but it is also an aid to help one be more creative and innovative when working on a project. Ahsan Abbass from Design house Inspurate suggests that the grid system is an aid, not a guarantee, and one must know how to use the grid in order to reap its benefits. Interestingly all three designers share the view that the grid must be learned, as it is not as simple or something to be taken for granted throughout the design process.

“The grid gives structure to chaos” states Saad Saif a student of design, the grid is given credit for the present day situation of design keeping in mind the evolution of design movements and modern design as it stands today. As mentioned in the section labelled “Literature Review” it can be argued that the grid has always been present even before people knew what a grid was. Its roots lie in the mathematical equations and is essentially derived from the forces of nature i.e. our natural surroundings. If we see things that are visually appealing and further dissect them we will find that they

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25 Imran Mir - Head of Advertising Agency Circuit - (transcribed interview)
26 Osama Khalid; Indus Valley graduate (Class of 2011) - Creative Visualizer at advertising agency Interflow - (transcribed interview)
27 Ahsan Abbass - Creative head at Design house INSURATE - (interview over email)
28 Saad Saif - student currently studying at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVSAA) Department of Communication Design, Semester 7 (interview over email)
are all based on the Fibonacci sequence, take for instance the human ear, the 
sunflower and even the composition of the solar system, all are based on the golden 
mean. Therefore it is only natural for a designer to incorporate something that would 
be visually appealing into their own design.

**The Role of the Grid; Academic vs. Professional**

The grid has been seen as a fundamental and basis to the process of design. Great 
emphasis has been placed on it throughout the course of a designers learning period. 
The grid is seen as” a set of rules and regulations,” says Osama Khalid, “and only 
once you learn those rules are you allowed to break them, in terms of design”.

Based on the findings of a questionnaire circulated amongst a sample of the target 
audience, ranging from the age group of 19 to 30, it was derived that 50 % of the 
sample find the grid restricting and only used the grid during their academic life 
because of the stress their teachers placed on it , whereas the other 50% of the sample 
found the grid to be an important part of the design process but don’t really make use 
of it in their professional lives. Therefore it can be concluded that throughout the 
learning period the use of the grid is given the utmost importance with regards to 
typography , and design in general, Saad Saif goes on to state that emphasis was 
placed on the use of the grid only because of assignments and during the learning 
period. He feels that the grid is somewhat of a constraint to design as it impedes 
creativity. Given the chance to work freely, on his own would be an opportunity to 
break free from the constraints set by the grid on his design work. Imran Mir is of a 
different opinion, he believes that the grid is the be all end all of design, its use in 
every design angle is imperative and he has learned and applied this throughout his
learning and professional career. Imran Mir studied at OCAD University and has
studied and worked under internationally renowned designer Milton Glaser. He has
gained the foreign/international exposure from one of the legends of his time and
thus applies that knowledge to his design. As a result the Ad agency Circuit comes
out with some of the “cleanest designs”

Mr Mir has a variety of work ranging from a minimalistic style to one that is most
organic in nature, which is fascinating to look at and even more interesting when one
talks of its process. All his work is done on a grid. Imran Mir is more than just your
average designer/artist, he believes that everything starts and ends with a grid.
However he, like others, has stressed on the need to attain a grasp on the application
of the grid before one can actually use it.

It has been noted that most people/designers share the belief that grid should be kept
in high regard during the process of design, however the grid in the design process
especially that of the commercial world has started to take a backseat. Omar Ahmad
from Ad Agency Spectrum acknowledges that the grid is beneficial and most helpful
to designers, but he also believes that work on design projects can be done without the
grid. Osama Khalid, who is presently at the transitional phase between academic
and professional careers has better assessed the situation by stating that when working
for clients in the business world, one must take into account that the client has no
knowledge or know how of how to use the grid or any part of the design process. The
client is only concerned with what the end result will be and whether they like it, so
you can spend your time working on a certain project with great emphasis on

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29 Imran Mir -Head of Advertising Agency Circuit (transcribed interview)
30 S.Omar Ahmed -Account Manager -Spectrum Y&R Communications (participant observation)
31 Osama Khalid ; Indus Valley graduate(Class of 2011) -Creative Visualizer at advertising agency Interflow.(transcribed interview)
alignment and sizing and everything that comes with the fundamentals of design, but at the end of the day you will probably have to change it so that the client is happy, because all you’re going to get from them is “I don’t like the way that looks” and that will be basis enough to change the design.

The Grid; is it applicable to more than just design?

“The grid is in your mind, it is in your thoughts” states designer Imran Mir, “it is the beginning and the end of all things”. It is applicable to every sphere of life. Analytical psychotherapist Jason Wright provides an insight into the psychology of the grid where he explains that the grid provides a sense of order and temporary respite from the pressing and basic human fears and dilemma’s, as per mentioned earlier in the Literature review section. This theory proposed that apart from organizing ones work the grid helps to bring order to a designer’s chaotic life.

Osama Khalid states that he likes order and he likes the rigidity of the grid, he sees the grid in almost everything in his surroundings, be it a mug to the rolling credits of a film, everything is based on a grid. It is an important aspect which orders things in a combination that is most pleasing to the human eye. This combination stems from the rule of thirds, also known as the Fibonacci sequence. Everything in the universe is

32 Book : *The Designer and the Grid*  
Authors : Lucienne Roberts and Julia Thrift  
Published :2002

33 Osama Khalid ; Indus Valley graduate( class of 2011) - Creative Visualizer at advertising agency Interflow( transcribed interview)

34 The rule of thirds is a “rule of thumb” or guideline which applies to the process of composing visual images such as paintings, photographs and designs. The guideline proposes that an image should be imagined as divided into nine equal parts by two equally-spaced horizontal lines and two equally-spaced vertical lines, and that important compositional elements should be placed along these lines or their intersections.
made according to this golden ratio and to adopt that into ones design would definitely make for a pleasing and conducive layout, piece as a whole.

It can thus be perceived that the grid is a universal entity that comes into play when addressing all spheres of life, not only is it important on a page or as the basis of a design, but in fact can be seen as “a set of rules and regulations that one may follow...” as put by Graphic designer Osama Khalid.35

The Grid as a slave to Commercialism

It can be deduced that the grid is an essential part of the design project, without which in the words of Ahsan Abbass36, a design would not look “set”. However after conducting various interviews it is interesting to note that the grid is not given as much importance in the corporate world as it should. It is more of format that designers are made to follow as per the requirements of their clients. This is evident in branding where many clients, whether they be local or international are extremely particular about the format of their adverts and the placement of the images and logos on their campaign pieces. Omar Ahmed37 from Spectrum further explains this by saying that there is design work that can be done without the grid and not many people make use of it, however it also depends on the client, for instance companies like Caltex Chevron are very particular in their formats, so essentially the grid is not

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35 Osama Khalid -Indus Valley graduate(Class of 2011) - Creative Visualizer at advertising agency Interflow-(transcribed interview)

36 Ahsan Abbass -Creative head -Design house INSURATE-( interview over email)

37 S.Omar Ahmed-Account Manager-Spectrum Y&R Communications -(participant observation)
being used as an aid to one’s design but it is serving as a format for an already existing design.

Similarly Osama Khalid shares the same views where design is lost to the whims of the client. The clients have no idea about why a certain typeface is the way it is or the difference in a body text and display text, all they want is for their adverts to be able to get the point across in the simplest way possible. This is where designers take a back seat and let commercialism dominate their process because at the end of the day, the client is paying money that designers are dependent on.

“Practically speaking, at times the graphic designer does not have the option to choose whether to use the grid or not.” states Tasneem Dara Khan38

She further goes on to explain that the ability of the designer to use the grid is completely dependent on the client and the product that is being advertised, and in the case of global branding this process is more demanding. There are certain brands which have large amounts of requirements when dealing with them, in terms of the size, colour and placement of their brands. Mrs.Dara Khan39 provided insight into the advertising world by explaining that advertising agencies are very broken up, it can be compared to an assembly line production system where the task is broken down into smaller tasks and there is a constant exchange of hands where the design work is concerned, so there is not one person working on anyone project. As a result it can be deduced that design does or does not make use of the grid, but that is completely dependent on the type of product and more importantly its brand. It can be seen that design as well as the grid has become more superficial and enslaved to capitalist

38 Tasneem Dara Khan - Director of Operations- Agency : Manhattan (Transcribed interview)

39 Tasneem Dara Khan - Director of Operations- Agency : Manhattan (Transcribed interview)
regimes and commercialism, however as Mrs Dara Khan put it, “We in Pakistan are what you call the adaption agencies, we are adapters to suit the local market “.

Qasim Makkani\textsuperscript{40} states that the grid is more of a “template” that has been established and is then sent to the agency. “We work within the confines of that template.”

On the same topic he pointed out that

“There are good templates and there are bad templates, but how you make use of them is based more on the content of your idea rather than on your design”.

The use of the grid has diminished substantially over the period of time and with its referral as a “template”, shows that design is limited; the creative is not permitted to expand on the design as per their job, they cannot change the layout as that is fixed.

Working conceptually in the most obvious way is a norm in the world of advertising.

“It’s like a complete format that they give you, they want the copy concept on the right hand side, the visual on the left hand side ,they want you to follow a specific world format…”\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40} Qasim Makkani-Associate Creative Director at Spectrum Y&R-(participant observation)

\textsuperscript{41} Tasneem Dara Khan - Director of Operations-Agency : Manhattan (Transcribed interview)
The Grid by International Standards

The section labelled Literature Review distinguishes two types of designers, those who use the grid and feel it enhances the potential of a design and those who do not use the grid as they feel it impedes creativity. However as per research a third kind of designer can be introduced into the equation and distinguished as those “who do not have an option to use or not to use the grid”\(^{42}\).

In today’s global world, advertising agencies are overrun with projects owned by multinational/international brands that are and have been established for a long period of time. Their identity in terms of design has already been set and ad agencies cannot divert from the pre designed guidelines that are personalized by a particular brand. Granted that these guidelines are designed on the basis of a grid that is very evident, in terms of logo placement, size, space etc., however localizing the use and value of the grid to the Pakistani market, this leaves little or no room for creativity on the part of local designer. Designers are merely given a format to follow, this format being set by the standards of multi nationals and international brands advertising in Pakistan. This also reminds us that the capitalistic environment we live in is a reality and affects everything. The higher and more established set a standard and the rest are expected to follow suit.

As mentioned before, Tasneem Dara Khan from Manhattan calls Pakistan ad agencies “Adaptive agencies” that cater to the local market by international standards, thereby reinforcing the fact that very seldom do designers in the local market get to do what they want with a design, the grid is not just a tool for design but it has become a

\(^{42}\) Tasneem Dara Khan - Director of Operations - Agency : Manhattan (Transcribed interview)
format to be followed. International styles of design are entering the local market via means of the grid; however at the same time it is completely restricting the local designer’s ability to create something new.

In the words of Joseph Muller Brockmann; “The grid system is an aid, not a guarantee. It permits a number of possible uses and each designer can look for a solution appropriate to his personal style. But one must learn how to use the grid; it is an art that requires practice.”

In the words of Imran Mir, “the Grid is all around you, it is always there, and it’s how you make use of it.” The Grid has been embedded in the foundations of our learning; it is applicable to more than just design, as Osama Khalid states that it is “a set of rules and regulations by which one can organize everything in their lives”. The grid is given most importance during the foundations of one’s academic design life, which could be to embed the knowledge and application of the grid as a tool into the students mind, as time progresses and the student begins a career in the “real world”, it can be concluded that the work environment does not stress on the need for the grid as much as one would assume it would.

As per research it can be deduced that the grid has taken a back seat in terms of design and in its practical commercial life; it is interesting to note that there does exist in the market a variety of designers, those who use the grid, those who do not and those who cannot because they have become slaves to commercialism. The local

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43 Imran Mir - Head of Advertising Agency Circuit (transcribed interview)
44 Commercialism is the application of both manufacturing and consumption towards personal usage, or the practices, methods, aims, and spirit of free enterprise geared toward generating profit.
market is overrun with multinationals that have already established an identity\textsuperscript{45} and a format of advertising that the public identifies them with. This entails that creative design and the use of the grid to its full potential e takes place or took place before these brands were established, and Pakistani agencies being the adaptive agencies that they are, follow suit. Granted the grid is always present, it is an integral part of the design process, but localizing its use to Pakistani markets, it is apparent that it is not often that designers get to do what they want to do.

The grid has become a format established by larger brands and companies; to follow the format means to follow the capitalist\textsuperscript{46} regime that is prevalent in the world’s society and economy, thus leaving local designers with no room to explore their own creativity.

\textsuperscript{45} An identity is a "Name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers, multinationals today have established brands or identities which have a set format, which is seen to be trademarked to them, their product and their style. To divert from the brands identity is not a feasible option for design firms / advertisers. Definition of Corporate Identity as per http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Corporate_identity

\textsuperscript{46} Capitalism is generally considered to be a philosophy of economic systems that favors private ownership of the means of production, creation of goods or services for profit or income by individuals or corporations, competitive markets, voluntary exchange, wage labor, capital accumulation, and personal finance. Definition of Capitalism as per http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalism
CONCLUSION

A piece of art or design cannot be produced in isolation, there are many factors that one must take into consideration, especially with work being done on a large commercial level, elements such as culture, demographics, trends and influences have an important part to play. Similarly a piece of art or design cannot be created without a basic framework on which its elements are placed. This basic framework is called “The grid”, whether designers like to admit it or not, everybody uses a grid, right down from the most complicated and organic designs to the simplest geometric shapes, a grid is essential in placement and organization of elements.

The approach towards the use grid has evolved to a point where it is flexible enough to vary from one individual to the next. Those who have a grasp on the workings and understanding of the grid are able to work with more complex variants of the grid, while there are others who prefer to keep it simple and make use of the basic grid which is a structure comprised of vertical and horizontal lines, and some are minimalistic in their approach to just have two lines across the page/screen which demarcates a space; this too is still a definable use of a grid.

The traditional role of the grid has come into flux and the ideal of implementing it to rigidly ascribe the design space and enforce the design concept has been transgressed over time. As explored in the literature review, the totality of grid has expanded to incorporate vast and differential visual concepts and movements in the design world. It is applied to all mediums in the forum of art and design, from the commercial to the eclectic. Based on the comprehensive research methods employed during the course
of my dissertation, the question, “Do we define the grid or does it define our design”, brought about findings in relation to the graphics being put into use, the genre of design practiced, the commercial demand and over all demographics of a city like Karachi, which is overrun with the constant need to conform to the international standard.

The Academic vs. the Professional Grid:

Throughout the course of a designers academic career the grid has been enforced with such fervour that whether or not one would like to use it, it is always there, whether it be on paper, screen or just in one’s mind. Everything is set according to a grid. After getting various views on the importance of the grid in design ranging from academic to professional walks of life, it can be determined that designs produced for personal use or production give a designer freedom to use the grid any which way they desire. A prime example being Mr. Imran Mir⁴⁷, who incorporates the grid into all of his work be it graphic design or fine art.

Based on the findings of a questionnaire⁴⁸ circulated amongst a sample of the target audience, ranging from the age group of 19 to 30, it was derived that 50 % of the sample find the grid restricting and only used the grid during their academic life because of the stress their teachers placed on it, whereas the other 50% of the sample found the grid to be an important part of the design process but don’t really make use of it in their professional lives. After conducting careful research it can be deduced that though the grid may be important as a foundation of learning, it tends to lose its

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⁴⁷ Imran Mir – Head of Advertising agency Circuit – Transcribed Interview
⁴⁸ Appendix 1
importance as one enters into a professional sphere of life, but as aforementioned, this
decision varies from person to person.

**The Birth of the third:**

As mentioned in the section labelled Literature Review, it has been established that
there are two kinds of designers\(^{49}\),

1. Those who find the grid restricting
2. Those who feel it enhances design.

After collecting research in the form of primary data (interviews and case
studies) it can be determined that a third category of individuals who use the
grid is present in the local market. These individuals fall under the category of
those who do not have an option but to use the grid. This is because when
working on a commercial level, designers are bound by the need to fulfil their
duty to the client.

**The Grid as a slave to commercialism:**

After an in depth analysis of the Pakistani design market with reference to the usage
of the grid, it can be determined that work done on a commercial level tends to lean
toward the designer and the grid becoming tools to commercialism / capitalism need,
as both the designer and the grid serve the purpose and need of the commercial
market. The grid has become an instrument used to enforce capitalism, it is a “format

\(^{49}\) Book : The Designer and the Grid
Author : Lucienne Roberts and Julia Thrift
Published : 2002
“set by international or multinational companies, and the designs follow a very set standard, leaving little or no room for creativity on the part of the designer.

Taking into account the role of ad agencies in Karachi, they have embrace the role of an “Adaption agency” where the demarcations are already outline according to a preset use of the grid and the design element merely follows suit of already existing formats. Thus with reference to the question at hand it can be concluded that in today’s market and world of advertising the grid as an agent of design is one that defines local design. As mentioned earlier the grid is a format set by international standards and that design sensibility is enforced onto the local markets.

But that is not the only facet of the grid in its application, as can be ascertained; there are a vast number of designers who use the grid with varying degrees of implementation. As more and more designers feel comfortable with their prowess and handling of the grid, the more they can experiment and define how they wish to implement the grid in their application to the design space.

Based on the findings it can be conclusively said that the grid is a means of augmenting an already established concept of design, it complements the theorizing behind the design by aiding the designer in establishing the space and harmony in its execution. To be noted that the grid has not lost its value in the design process but its importance varies according to its location, that being where the design is established and where it is being enforced.

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50 S.Omar Ahmed - Account Manager - Spectrum Y&R Communications - (participant observation)  
51 Tasneem Dara Khan - Director of Operations - Agency: Manhattan (Transcribed interview)
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire and Tabulated results

Age: Gender: Occupation:

1. Do you know what a grid is?
   Yes  No

2. Do you use a grid in your design?
   Yes  No

3. Do you think the grid is an important aspect of design/layouts? Why

4. In your opinion does the grid Impede creativity or does it enhance it?

5. Throughout the course of your design life, when was the most emphasis given to using a grid? Why do you think this was?

Tabulated Results:

Based on the findings of a questionnaire circulated amongst a sample of the target audience, ranging from the age group of 19 to 30, it was derived that 50% of the sample find the grid restricting and only used the grid during their academic life because of the stress their teachers placed on it, whereas the other 50% of the sample found the grid to be an important part of the design process but don’t really make use of it in their professional lives.
Appendix 2: Interview Questions and Transcribed Interviews

Interview Questions

1. What do you understand by the term “grid”?

2. What is the relevance of the grid to your designs?

3. Would you use the grid more when you were learning or in your professional life. Elaborate.

4. Taking into account design movements and the evolution of design, what role do you think the grid has played in aiding this process?

5. Do you think the use and application of the grid is an integral part of the design process?

6. How important is the grid for you as a basis/platform of design. What are in your opinion the pros and cons of using a grid.
Interview with Imran Mir

Creative Head at Circuit

Maria – Basically I was wondering how important is the grid in the design process?

Imran – You mean design? Or…

Maria – Yes. Graphic Design. I just have a few questions to ask you. How important is the grid to you? Like what do you feel about the grid? As a part of the design…

Imran – You always need a grid. When you’re designing your layout, you look at the grid and you also have it in your mind. After a certain time, you don’t need the grid and you know with experience. The grid is very important.

Maria – Do you think its applicable to more than just design? In the sense, during my literature review I have done a little bit of research and a lot of designers they think that the grid has more to do with kind of arranging your life and things that are not in order in your everyday life then maybe they can bring some order to which while they work.

Imran – humans for example, they can’t ignore the grid. They need to have a design sense to use the grid. If you don’t have a design sense then you cant.

Maria – so you think that design sense is something that you learn how to use the grid or is it some kind of tool?

Imran – design sense is something very natural and something…
Maria— so you have to have that flare for it

Imran – that’s why people go for graphic design and they work hard but they don’t have that kind of color sense and design sense.

Maria – So you feel that there’s an important aspect, and its like the foundation…

Imran – I see everything on the grid.

Maria – so there’s a different design movement that have happened throughout in the course of history and what do you think the important of the grid was to them and how modern design has become now because initially we have you know a more decorative and more ornamental kind of.

Imran – Even then

Maria – even then?

Imran – Even then.

Maria – But it’s changed now, now you have more of a minimal kind of look to design, right?

Imran – yeah! Still the grid is there! Even your computer is based on the whole system

Maria – I want to know your opinion is about the design movements and we how we’ve come to where we are, if you look at Pakistani design and adverts, looking at it from a commercial view point, I mean how do you think that the grid has changed its shape, changed the structure and the way people are using it.
Imran – I’ve seen lots of ads in newspapers and brochures they don’t know how to use the grid but they always make a mess. You can feel that you can see that yeh ghalat ho raha hai. What you have to divide your page and usi pe aap ko kaam karna ho ta hai
Interview with Osama Khalid

Creative Visualizer at Interflow

Maria – So what do you understand by the term the grid?

Osama – A set of rules and regulations that classify how aesthetically your design will be placed.

Maria – What is the relevance of the grid to your design process?

Osama – Well it’s the foundation of it. Definitely. Most definitely. Any good designer would know how to use a grid.

Maria – You are a fresh graduate, right and now you’re working at interflow?

Osama – Yes I am!

Maria – Do you think that the grid is given more importance in your academic life or professionally?

Osama – it’s more like an all-around thing, it starts off in your academic life and if you’ve been able use the grid in your academic years then would be able to break the rules more often because everybody knows for example the golden ratio that we use in grid that will always be aesthetically pleasing to any design but we all know that uniformity becomes mundane if everybody is using the golden ratio for example so to
answer your question about where its applied more, I don’t think it’s the question of where its applied, I think it’s the question of how well you apply it. It’s like an exponential growth.

Maria – so keeping that in mind, there are mixed views on the usefulness of the grid, some say that they are useful and makes the design more innovative while others regard it as restrictive and impedes creativity. What are your views on this?

Osama– There are some people who are naturally more gifted in art than others. Some people can generally see a grid in whatever they’re designing. When it comes to academic, usually and psychologically academics, some people take it as a period of restraint. In the sense, like you said it impedes creativity for them because it’s always been a natural thing for them. I don’t think it impedes creativity, I think it’s necessary to be able to be creative. So I would say the former that it is innovative.

Maria – Tell me from your personal experience; so far you’ve been working and stuff, how and where all has the grid been applicable for you?

Osama – Everything! Except, the only place where the grid won’t be applicable is when you’re brainstorming. I mean everything in design from posters to credits in movies, mugs, everything and anything in design has a grid in it.
Maria – So when you think of the grid, is it just vertical/horizontal lines or do you think that, taking into account the Fibonacci sequence and stuff, do you use a very rigid grid or something different.

Osama – I stick to rigid grids because I would really really test the rules of grids when I’m working on something on my own but generally in the professional life, to go absolutely crazy, for example like Paula Scher did with her posters and maps she has done, what grids can you see in that? It’s very difficult to see a grid in that but those have to be very personal works you are close to but generally in the professional life, you have to stick to grids because clients, those business donkeys, it’s difficult from them to break away from change.

Maria – So all work related aside, do you think that grid is more applicable to more than just design?

Osama – You mean more than just aesthetics?

Maria – In my literature review, I came across this article, which kind of said that designers use the grid more because they feel that it organises not only their design but their chaotic lives as well. So do you think that using the grid helps you organise yourself or bring things more into perspective for you?

Osama – Personally, I’m very, not a perfectionist but I’m somewhat of an ordered person, I like things around me to be ordered but myself I think I’m very chaotic so I think that ying yang, chaos within me and the grids in design, I enjoy it because whenever we start designing, even sometimes when you’ve got some sort of a design block, you start playing around with your grids, usually modular grids, so yeah it may
help some designers but to say that it helps every designer would be a long shot. It will be common amongst many designers but it would be a long shot to say it’s popular.

Maria – You’re saying that grid is foundation that every student is taught in his academic life, so during assignments and stuff, your teachers would have obviously placed emphasis on it to use a grid. Now what I’m interested in knowing is that now your clients or your boss that they don’t necessarily give that much importance to the grid?

Osama – Not in this country.

Maria – Why do you feel that?

Osama – it’s a very sad statement but because they are not as educated (clients). My bosses do care about grids because they care about aesthetics. My clients again care about aesthetics so do they care about grids. Can you see where the priority lies? Aesthetics for clients and grids for boss. If you cut it down to its root, that’s where it is after that then there’s a lot of grey matter.

Maria – Won’t aesthetics and the grid fall under the same category?

Osama – No you’re talking about when you start design right? So when you’re starting on a grid then like I said my boss cares about grids because he cares about aesthetics. So he knows that a grid is important because it’ll be aesthetically pleasing.
Most clients won’t even know. They won’t say “iss may grid nahi hai”, they’ll say, “acha nahi lag raha” that’s all they say. That’s what we’ve been trained to do. We’ve been trained to psychologically make whatever the persons looking at, to like it. And when they like it and they appreciate it, we know that there’s a certain grid that has been applied. Everything around has a grid since we’ve grown up. Our clothes, our doors, yeah. Everything has lines, everything needs to be set up on a horizontal scale. Rosetta’s stone, that’s a grid, a one-column grid. Grids are really important!
Interview with Tasneem Dara Khan

Director of Operations at Advertising Agency Manhattan

Maria – what in your opinion is the grids importance to design?

Tasneem – What do you mean by a grid?

Maria – well by definition the grid is a framework of vertical and horizontal lines, what I’m asking in relevance to is the process of design, what role does the grid play for you in the design process?

Tasneem – oh I see… well let me start of by saying that I don’t handle implementing a design, The graphic designer will sit with the creative and give the layout, but everything in the format that it is done is done by the graphic designer, which is you if you’re sitting in front of the computer. Copy concept, everything will come in … colours are normally in Pakistan designated by the client, because of corporate requisites, take for example standard chartered, will have the blue and the green, so the colours have to be corporate. Now if it’s a client that doesn’t care, let’s say it’s a new campaign, a brand new one… let’s say Shan masala is launching a new product and they leave it up to us, like we designed the supreme pack for the tea… they didn’t give us the colours…

Maria - so that falls under Brand management doesn’t it?
Tasneem - Everything... It comes with the client service, the person who goes in to get
the brief, a creative is also with them, and the creative director will always go. The
brief is brought and after that the process is always, first comes the copy concept and
what the big idea is and then how it’s going to be positioned is the job of the graphic
designer. Colours depending on the product its self can be given by the client so you
can’t deviate, which is quite frustrating actually, because they like using their own
imagination their own creativity,

It’s like a complete format that they give you, they want the copy concept on the right
hand side, the visual on the left hand side ,they want you to follow a specific world
format where the CDC is not Pakistan, again it depends on your client.

Please remember always.

Maria – So a different angle that I can gather from this is that the use of the grid
depends on the client and their branding…

Tasneem – Completely on the client and the product. Like Shan masala and National
masala are not global brands so here we develop our own formats... They are
globalized brands, meaning they send them abroad and they put them up on the cable
networks.

Maria –Essentially the grid is something that has to be used in the way the client
wants it... So does that mean the designer has no say in the layout? That would make
him/her a mere computer operator?

Tasneem – well there are times when designers don’t have the option but to use the
grid, it’s something that the client wants and at the end of the day we have to fulfil the
wants of the client. For example if you have a strong established brand then you have to follow the characteristics of its identity, which is recognized world-wide. We in Pakistan are what you’d call adaptive agencies; we conform to the requirements of our clients and sell that to the local market.
Appendix 3: Case Study

Case Study: Participant Observation

Duration: 2 weeks

Agency: Spectrum Y&R

Sample under observation: Creative Department

Note: During the course of the observation it was agreed that no information regarding clientele and campaign ideas/ projects be revealed.

While working alongside the creative department at Spectrum Y&R, I had the opportunity to get an internal view of the creative design process. Coming into contact with a variety of people both visualizers and copy-writers proved insightful to my topic of research.

It was observed that not much attention is paid to using a grid in the process of design. Syed Umair (visualizer and illustrator at Spectrum Y&R) when asked about the extent of the use of the grid in his design replied with “what grid?”

Presentations both internal and external are made directly on Microsoft Power Point and all text is set according to the default settings.
There is more emphasis paid to imagery / concept, design is preferred to be secondary to the content, which suffers due to the obvious layout. So in fact if there is to be any innovation in the advertising of a campaign it is completely shot down by the client, given the restraints that the designers are given to work with.