Space refers to the overall area occupied by the design. In the advertising world, it may be as large as the side of a truck, the tail of an airplane or the side of a building. It also can be as small as a matchbox, a label or a lapel button. The design space can be any shape or even 3-dimensional, such as a coffee mug, a balloon or a trade show display.

When a designer places other elements within the design area, the concept of space takes on additional meanings. Positive space in any design is the space occupied by active elements such as type and pictorials. This is the space that conveys information. The viewer’s brain is more active when his eyes encounter the positive spaces within a design.

Negative space surrounds positive elements and may be thought of as the background of the ad. The viewer’s mind is required to digest less information when his eyes pass over negative space.

Negative space is sometimes referred to as white space, but that does not mean that negative space is white. It doesn't even mean that the space is blank. Actually, it may be any color or even patterned or textured. In this context, the term white space is used in the same way the term white noise is used to describe radio static, elevator music or the din of conversations in a restaurant. White noise is audible and is part of the total environment. The sound may even have patterns such as words, but we
Elements of Design don't pay attention to it. In a more visual sense, Negative space like wallpaper. You're aware of it, but it's just a backdrop for more important features like the furniture and people in the room.

Negative space may be present within active elements. For instance, the space around letters in a copy block or the sky in a photo of a scenic location are negative spaces. In fact, the same space may be positive or negative depending on what is next to it. Negative space isn't defined by its appearance, but rather by its relative importance in terms of information conveyed.

The quantity of negative space in a design is pretty much irrelevant. You can have quite a lot or not so much depending on the look you are trying to achieve.

On the other hand, designers consider the distribution of positive and negative space very carefully. They want to make it easy for the viewer to see the things that are important in the ad while creating a pleasing pattern of both positive and negative areas. A design is more visually pleasing when areas of negative space are distributed throughout the total design space rather than when it is concentrated in one or two locations.

The only difference between these two designs is the arrangement of the elements. Notice how the left-hand ad seems to have a big blank hole below the picture. Your eye must jump over it in order to reach the elements near the bottom of the page. The repositioning of the positive elements also redistributes the negative space and allows your eye to flow easily to all the elements.