

The Status of the Audience in New Advertising Policies (With a Focus on Iran)

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to investigate the new status of the audience in contemporary advertising policies, with a particular focus on Iran. This research seeks to demonstrate how media, interactive technologies, and new message design strategies have redefined the relationship between advertising and its audience. Today's audience is not merely a passive recipient of messages but plays an active role in meaning-making and influencing the effectiveness of advertisements. The research employs a qualitative and fundamental methodology, utilizing library research, document analysis, and content analysis of 250 domestic and international advertising samples from 2010 to 2020. Advertisements were analyzed based on interactive elements, design types, persuasion strategies, and audience responses. Data collection tools included print and electronic sources, images, and analytical forms. Findings indicate that new technologies—such as interactive media, advanced graphics, augmented reality, and experience-oriented design—have transformed the position of the audience. The audience has shifted from a passive role to that of a meaningful agent. Examples such as the Delester interactive billboard or Apple Vision Pro augmented reality glasses illustrate the active role of the audience in engagement, psychological persuasion, and advertising experience. The study concludes that the success of advertising depends on recognizing the audience as an active element. Effective advertisements are those that allow the audience to participate, experience, and choose, making the message memorable by stimulating cognitive, emotional, and sensory responses.

Keywords: Iran, advertising, audience, policy, status.

1. Introduction

In the modern era, commercial advertising, as one of the primary tools for engaging with society, has opened a new path in audience interaction by leveraging emerging technologies. The objective of advertising in this context is not merely to persuade the audience to purchase but to create a mental and participatory experience that is etched into memory through the use of hybrid technologies and novel media structures [1, 2].

Visual design and graphics, as an art form deeply embedded in daily life, have endowed advertising with a multidimensional and interactive nature [3]. Today, the audience is no longer a mere spectator; they participate in the advertising process, make decisions, and even contribute to the construction of meaning. Accordingly, advertising has evolved beyond one-way, direct methods and is increasingly adopting participatory, interactive,

creative, and engaging forms. In an environment saturated with advertisements, the modern audience—exhausted by repetition and cliché—responds only when confronted with novel, distinct, and immersive experiences [4, 5].

Today's audience requires more cognitive and emotional stimulation than ever before, and advertisements that can leave the greatest impact in the shortest amount of time through creative narratives and unique imagery are more likely to succeed [6]. Modern advertising demands a precise psychological understanding of the audience, who now lead digital lifestyles, depend on multiple communication platforms, and are exposed to an overwhelming volume of media messages [7].

In this regard, hyperrealism, as a novel advertising strategy, has effectively captured attention and enhanced message retention by employing contrast, imagination, exaggeration, and visual shock. As demonstrated by Ma'navi-Rad and Fatemi (2017), creative and unrealistic imagery can deeply imprint the message in the audience's mind, even if it lacks credibility [8].

Digital environmental advertising—by integrating visual technologies, motion, light, and sound—has created a new level of perceptual and cognitive engagement. Unlike traditional methods that merely convey a message, these ads deliver a multisensory and multilayered experience. The significance of this form of advertising lies in its deep connection with the audience's everyday life, leading to the gradual replacement of traditional environmental formats with dynamic and digital media, and transforming the audience's mental and sensory interaction with advertising. Complementing this process, research in cognitive science indicates that the more active the audience is during message reception, the more neural pathways are engaged, increasing the likelihood of message encoding and recall. Therefore, genuine interaction with the audience is not merely an aesthetic or technical choice but a cognitive-psychological necessity grounded in human mental structure. From this perspective, successful advertising must be designed to stimulate all five senses and activate visual, emotional, and decision-making memory systems [7].

Ashouri (2015) also emphasizes that creativity in advertising is not only a differentiating factor but a prerequisite for mental impact and survival. Advertisements lacking creativity—regardless of budget or broadcast volume—fail to register in the audience's mind and thus lose their effectiveness. She highlights the relationship between creativity and audience demographics, asserting that understanding audience characteristics must be the foundation of ad design [9].

Additionally, Fathabadi (2021) clearly demonstrates that urban advertising without an accurate understanding of audience location, preferences, and needs will not yield effective outcomes. Advertising is successfully conveyed only when the audience is considered a central part of the equation (Fathabadi, 2021). The communication between sender, message, and receiver only becomes effective through the acknowledgment of the audience's psychological, social, and cultural traits [10].

In line with this, Abbasi (2014), through his study of interactive art as a platform for audience participation, argues that advertising—much like contemporary art—can transform the audience from a passive observer into an active agent who not only receives but also interacts with and even reproduces meaning [11].

This approach is increasingly vital in today's advertising, as the audience seeks not only to receive messages but also to engage, experience, and even find identity within them. Contemporary successful advertisements are, in fact, representations of societies' cultural and identity systems. In other words, advertising targets not only the consumption of goods but also the consumption of meaning, lifestyle, and values. From this perspective, brands are no longer mere sellers of products but purveyors of narratives in which audiences see themselves reflected.

This emotional and identity-based bond between brand and audience is not forged through unidirectional messages but through the creation of shared and interactive experiences.

Interactive art is based on inviting the audience to participate, and this characteristic is exactly what contemporary commercial advertising needs for effective survival (Emamifar & Jahangiri, 2019). Considering all these perspectives, the present study aims to explore the status of the audience in modern commercial advertising, assess their transformation from passive spectators to active participants, and demonstrate how novel media forms, creative presentation, and interactive technologies enhance the audience's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement [12], ultimately leading to more effective advertising.

In this trajectory, the central research question of the study is: What is the status of the audience in new commercial advertising?

2. Methodology

To conduct a precise, scientific, and detail-oriented study, selecting a research method aligned with the nature of the subject and the study's objectives is essential. The research method defines how the researcher seeks to uncover truth, collect valid data, and arrive at reliable results. In the present study, the aim is to describe the objective, observable, and real characteristics of the phenomenon known as "the status of the audience in new commercial advertising." To achieve this goal, a qualitative approach based on content analysis was adopted.

This study is categorized as fundamental research, where the researcher examined concepts, trends, and transformations in the domain of commercial advertising and audience status through written, electronic, and visual sources. The data collection method was documentary. The sources included books, scholarly articles, theses, relevant research studies, archival documents, and advertising content published in digital spaces and new media. These were utilized through tools such as computers, mobile phones, internet searches, and even photography of advertising visuals.

The data were organized using standardized note-taking tools, data registration tables, and content analysis forms, followed by classification and qualitative analysis. In the analysis phase, the data were examined using descriptive-analytical techniques. First, advertisements gathered from various sources were categorized based on year of production, geographical location, visual techniques, media type, and degree of audience interactivity. Then, they were analyzed in terms of the audience's presence and role in each advertisement, levels of participation, and engagement methods.

The study sample consisted of 250 commercial advertisements from the period 2010 to 2020, primarily gathered from reputable international advertising and media websites. Some advertisements were from well-known international agencies in countries such as Italy, the United States, and Switzerland, while others were domestic. However, due to low quality, repetitive visual messaging, or cultural and value misalignment with the target society, some advertisements were excluded. Thus, the statistical population of this study was a purposive and selected set of commercial advertisements suitable for content analysis and audience interaction review.

In the data analysis process, the research focused on identifying how the audience's status in advertising evolved from a passive position to that of an active decision-maker, and which tools, techniques, and formats facilitated this change. Furthermore, by comparing advertisements across different time periods in terms of message presentation style, use of imagery and slogans, levels of cognitive engagement, and call-to-action elements, the evolution of the audience's role in the advertising process was analyzed and explained. These analyses were grounded in a qualitative methodology, with an emphasis on deep and comparative content analysis. The main objective was to

develop a deeper understanding of the reciprocal relationship between advertising and the audience, and to explore how advertising effectiveness could be enhanced through accurate audience recognition and effective engagement.

This approach not only clarifies the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the topic but also provides valuable insights for advertising agencies, commercial campaign designers, and researchers in communication and media studies. It enables them to redesign their strategies based on today's audience-oriented imperatives and to produce advertisements that align with the needs, concerns, and lifestyles of the contemporary audience.

3. Findings and Results

Having completed the theoretical stages, conceptual foundations, and a review of related literature, the study now proceeds to the analysis of the collected data to achieve a clearer and more precise understanding of the status of the audience in new commercial advertising. The data derived from purposively selected advertising samples from credible sources provided a suitable basis for examining the presence, role, interaction, and impact of the audience in this type of advertising.

This section, based on a qualitative method and content analysis of advertisements within a defined timeframe, aims to reveal the key trends influencing the transformation of the audience's role. The analysis of the selected samples shows how the audience has shifted from a passive observer to an active participant and how this shift has affected the form, structure, and content of advertisements. Elements such as illustration style, narrative structure, emotional engagement, participatory invitations, and the use of technological and media components are evaluated to assess the audience's presence and their modes of interaction with advertisements.

Thus, this section serves as a bridge between the theoretical framework and the study's objectives, offering concrete, evidence-based insights into the real status of the audience within the structure of modern commercial advertising.

Table 1. Levels of Audience Engagement and Elements

Engagement Category	Audience Role	Engagement Model	Existence	Interactive Encounter
Ordinary Audience	Visual	Ineffective	Continuity of existence without audience presence	Observation and Evaluation
Interactive Audience	Tactile	Slightly effective	Transformation with audience presence	Intervention
Highly Participatory Interactive Audience	Constructive	Effective and efficient	Nonexistence in absence of audience	Innovation, Creation, and Form Generation

In analyzing the collected data, what stands out most is the notable transformation in the status of the audience in commercial advertising over the past decade. A review of advertising samples from 2010 to 2020 reveals a gradual yet definitive trend toward establishing a bidirectional interaction with the audience. This interaction is made possible not only through digital technologies and media but also by a deeper understanding of audience behavior, needs, preferences, and emotions.

In most of the reviewed samples, the audience's presence is not limited to passive observation; rather, they are directly or implicitly involved in meaning-making processes. Signs of this transformation are evident in nonlinear storytelling formats, creative use of imagery and color, interactive calls to action, incorporation of local cultural codes, and utilization of accessible and intelligent platforms.

A comparison between advertisements from the early and late years of the decade reveals striking differences in tone, form, and content, all pointing toward a shift away from traditional models and toward multilayered,

participatory structures. Advertisements in which the audience is merely a recipient of the message have increasingly been replaced by those in which the audience plays the role of participant, decision-maker, and even co-creator of meaning.

This transformation has been evaluated through specific elements such as visual representation, use of slogans, surprise elements, tone of communication, and the balance between visual and textual formats. While similarities in emotional and psychological tactics for eliciting audience responses are observed across Western and domestic samples, noticeable cultural, stylistic, and persuasive differences are also evident.

In most successful examples, the audience's participation is central not only at the stage of message reception but also in decision-making and brand preference. Evidence of this participation is visible through feedback, direct interaction via social networks, use of personalized elements, and digital measurement tools.

This indicates that the audience's status has shifted from a final element in the advertising cycle to a starting and defining point. Commercial advertising in today's world is designed, redesigned, and updated based on audience characteristics and behaviors. The analyses reveal that the higher the audience's cognitive and emotional engagement with the advertisement, the greater the advertisement's effectiveness, as reflected in higher recall, purchase intention, and brand loyalty.

In reality, modern advertising functions less as a tool for immediate sales and more as a medium for creating lasting experiences, gradual trust-building, and emotional relationships with the audience. Achieving this requires nothing less than a precise analysis of audience status and the strategic use of new communication methods.



Figure 1. Sample 1

The beverage advertising billboard designed and executed by FOLD7 in the Brick Lane area of London is an example of innovative outdoor environmental advertising that has successfully conveyed a memorable and effective message through direct interaction with the audience. In this advertisement, a real tap is installed on the billboard, offering free drinks to passersby. This mechanism not only practically involves the audience in the advertising process but also establishes a positive, emotional, and memorable relationship between the brand and the consumer by evoking the sensation of receiving a gift.

The billboard's dominant green color—symbolizing nature, freshness, and a healthy lifestyle—visually communicates the product's non-alcoholic nature and conveys an impression of vitality and wellness. The white typography at the center of the billboard displays a curiosity-inducing phrase that captures the viewer's attention and disrupts their routine path to engage them with the message.

This billboard, which implicitly positions the brand as “the best poster in the world,” creates an intelligent connection between the product and the direct experience of the audience through visual and sensory elements. It is designed to influence audience behavior not through coercion but via psychological stimulation and subtle persuasion. According to the Interactive Elements Analysis Table (Table 4-2), this advertisement features visual design integrated with both hardware and software interfaces, offering a moderate level of interactivity based on touch, thereby enabling active audience participation.

The visual appeal of this billboard employs a logic-based persuasion approach, wherein the audience quickly grasps the utility and quality of the product upon seeing the drink tap and its function. This advertisement specifically targets audiences who are immersed in public and collective environments and value social experiences. It successfully generates satisfaction and engagement in the viewer by creating a shared experience in a real-world setting.

From a perceptual standpoint, the analysis indicates that viewers tend to share their thoughts and feelings about the advertisement with others, thereby facilitating message transmission in a social context. From the perspective of audience action, the advertisement reveals that individuals are involved not only physically but also psychologically, unconsciously internalizing the advertising message.

Interestingly, this persuasion process preserves the audience’s sense of autonomy, allowing them to believe that their choice and behavior are self-initiated, when in fact, this choice is subtly engineered within the psychological framework of the advertisement. By employing the technique of “gift-giving,” the advertisement successfully fosters a human and positive relationship with the audience, reinforcing feelings of appreciation, respect, and brand recall.

Regarding target demographics, this advertisement is not limited by gender and appeals to both men and women across a wide age range—from youth to elderly individuals. According to Park’s model (Table 4-1), the audience type here is interactive, where tactile participation leads to a dynamic experience. Although the level of cognitive involvement is estimated to be low in the ideal engagement model, the created physical and social interaction produces actual behavioral change in the consumer, elevating the advertisement from a mere poster to an effective tool for audience engagement.

In conclusion, this billboard example serves as a successful demonstration of the impact of interactive environmental advertising, which—through the use of visual, experiential, and persuasive elements—not only communicates the brand’s message but also purposefully influences the audience’s behavior and attitudes.

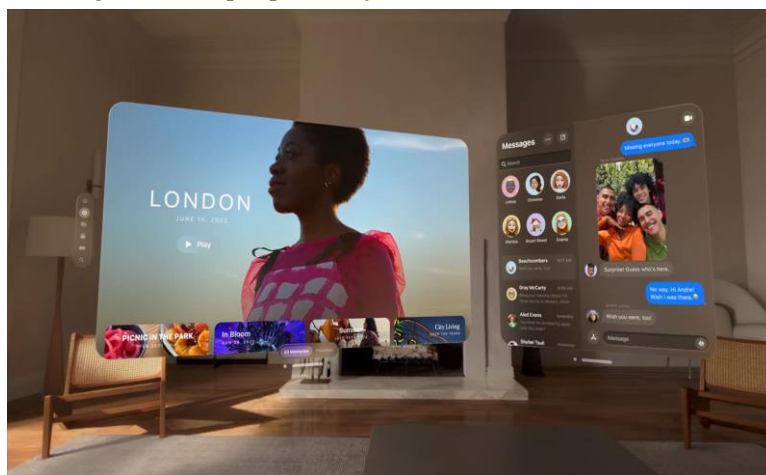


Figure 2. Sample Two

Apple Vision Pro, as one of the most advanced augmented reality devices introduced by Apple, represents a significant step forward in the integration of technology and human experience. This virtual headset, featuring a three-dimensional interface and the ability to display applications in various sizes and real-world locations, offers the audience a comprehensive and immersive experience of mixed reality.

Equipped with dual high-resolution displays, it transforms any space into a personal cinema, clearly demonstrating how technology can target the deepest sensory and cognitive needs of humans. The product's design is grounded in experientialism and advanced graphics, with a user interface based on touch and eye-tracking gestures, providing a high level of interactivity. In this context, the user is not merely a consumer but also a co-creator of content.

From the perspective of audience persuasion, Apple Vision Pro integrates logical and emotional appeal to showcase functional values such as quality, precision, usability, and utility while also stimulating internal emotions and needs, thereby establishing an emotional and human connection with the user. The device is designed to be accessible to all age groups—from teenagers to the elderly—and both genders, without requiring complex training or encountering cultural or social barriers.

Perceptual analysis reveals that Apple Vision Pro profoundly influences how users receive messages, comprehend content, and apply it in everyday life. By creating shared experiences and engaging multiple senses, it activates the user's memory, attention, and creativity. This multisensory cognitive experience contributes to user satisfaction and continued use of the device.

On a psychological and social level, Apple Vision Pro respects individual differences and beliefs, enabling personal, unbiased, and internalized interactions in which the audience feels connected to a humane, comprehensible, and empathetic product. This experience is also evident in the user's actions, as consumers not only select their preferred media but actively interact with the device to fulfill specific needs.

Apple Vision Pro successfully induces attitude and behavioral change without direct coercion but through cognitive and psychological guidance, allowing users to believe they have acted out of personal choice, even though the structure of the advertisement and product is designed to align that choice with the brand's objectives. This type of persuasion—utilizing both verbal and nonverbal techniques within the framework of digital aesthetics—establishes a sustainable and reciprocal relationship between humans and technology.

The audience's function in this advertisement is constructive and creative; without their participation, the device loses efficacy, as the audience's presence is essential not just for usage but for realizing meaning, content, and experience. In other words, this technology only becomes meaningful within a context of active engagement and participation.

According to Park's theory and the audience typology model, the Apple Vision Pro user is the quintessential example of an interactive audience—one who is not merely a consumer but a creative agent and meaning-maker. The product itself is designed, experienced, and evolved based on this participation.

This type of advertising and product represents the trajectory of future advertising—moving beyond mere display to inviting audiences into cognitive, emotional, and behavioral synergy, and through this co-action, generating an experience that transcends advertising and technology.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Through a comprehensive examination of the audience's status in modern commercial advertising and the analysis of case studies such as the Delester interactive drink billboard and the Apple Vision Pro augmented reality

device, a multidimensional and in-depth understanding of the evolving role of the audience within contemporary advertising structures can be reached. The analyses reveal that in today's advertising landscape, the audience is no longer a passive recipient but rather an informed, participatory agent who, in some instances, acts as a producer of meaning. The audience does not merely view the advertisement but interacts with it, intervenes in its construction, and reinterprets it based on individual needs and perspectives.

This shift in audience status—manifested through tactile, experiential, perceptual, and emotional participation—aligns with contemporary advertising theories, where models of interactivity, bidirectional persuasion, and audience-as-agent have replaced traditional one-way communication paradigms. The clear alignment of these findings with the study's theoretical background—particularly Abbasi's (2014) work on interactive art, Ma'navi-Rad and Fatemi's (2017) research on hyperreal persuasion, and Fathabadi's (2021) study on urban advertising—demonstrates that the current understanding of the audience in advertising emphasizes not message reception, but reciprocal action, psychological insight, and mutual influence between message and receiver [8, 10, 11].

The drink billboard case illustrates that even in traditional media formats such as outdoor advertising, the integration of direct interaction, sensory involvement, and personalized experience can shift the audience from passive passerby to purposeful actor. This experience—achieved through gifting, visual shock, and intelligent design—leads to durable message retention. Conversely, the Apple Vision Pro exemplifies how in tech-based advertising, the boundaries between content, medium, message, and audience dissolve, giving rise to a fully integrated experience in which the audience plays a central role, and without whom the product loses its meaning and functionality.

These examples clearly show that audience persuasion in the contemporary era is achieved through a combination of emotion, logic, sensory experience, interactive design, and the application of intelligent technologies. The success of advertising depends on how effectively these tools are integrated so that the audience not only feels a sense of inclusion in the advertising process but also perceives themselves as part of it.

The overarching conclusion of this study is that today's commercial advertising necessitates a redefinition of the audience's role across all stages of design, implementation, and evaluation. The audience is no longer the endpoint of the communication chain but rather the origin of meaning, experience, and advertising impact. In essence, the path to successful advertising lies in deep audience insight, attention to their psychological, cultural, and social needs, and the creation of engaging, participatory experiences that simultaneously lead to persuasion, influence, and message retention.

Accordingly, it can be asserted that future commercial advertising strategies will inevitably be shaped by deeper audience relationships, the use of interactive media, and the implementation of multidirectional communication models. Only those brands that regard the audience as a partner in meaning-making and experience-building will be able to secure a lasting place in the minds, hearts, and behaviors of their consumers.

Aligned with this perspective, the growing importance of experience design in advertising becomes evident. This model focuses not merely on message transmission but on crafting an emotional and cognitive journey for the audience, wherein each interaction with the advertisement is perceived as part of a complete experience. Within this framework, every advertising element—from color, sound, and motion to space, timing, and interaction format—must function toward constructing a cohesive, purpose-driven, and personalized experience. Such design evokes not only a sense of involvement but also a feeling of ownership toward the content. An audience engaged in the experience design process is likely to feel closer to the brand, remember the message more effectively, and exhibit a higher probability of brand loyalty.

On the other hand, the role of artificial intelligence and big data in this process cannot be overlooked. In contemporary digital advertising, mining user behavior data across online platforms enables deeper understanding of audience preferences, needs, and behavioral patterns. These insights serve as tools for designing personalized, timely, and contextually relevant messages. Advertising is no longer a static message for all, but rather a set of dynamic communications adapted to the audience's spatial and temporal context, prior interactions, and psychographic profiles. Advertisements based on precise behavior analysis within interactive environments are not only more effective in message delivery but also foster longer-term relationships between brand and audience.

Case studies of advertising campaigns by brands like Nike and Coca-Cola in recent years further support these insights. Campaigns that invited audience participation in the brand narrative—such as content creation, sharing personal experiences, or interacting with virtual brand characters—achieved significantly higher effectiveness. In this approach, the audience is no longer merely a consumer but becomes a part of the brand's identity and story. This type of bidirectional engagement fosters emotional and cultural connections between audience and brand, transforming advertising from a communicative tool into a collaborative and participatory process.

Another key development in recent commercial advertising is the increasing attention to cultural diversity and generational differences. New generations of audiences—particularly Generation Z and Generation Alpha—have distinct perceptual models. These generations have grown up with technology, prefer active participation, and avoid shallow or stereotypical advertising. They seek honest, value-based, and interactive content that aligns with their concerns and identities. Therefore, future advertising strategies must incorporate local cultural narratives, innovative visual languages, and values such as social justice, environmental sustainability, and identity diversity. Brands that address these demands will be able to establish deep, enduring, and multidimensional connections with their audiences.

Moreover, technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and the metaverse are shaping a new chapter in advertising—a chapter where the line between real and virtual spaces is blurred, and audiences can step into brand-constructed worlds, interact with them, make decisions, and even contribute to their creation. In such environments, the advertising experience approaches the level of lived experience, and this convergence is the key element that ensures the emotional durability of the message.

In sum, the new understanding of the audience in modern commercial advertising emerges from the integration of communication, psychological, cultural, and technological theories. It is an understanding that emphasizes the audience not as a target but as a strategic partner in designing and realizing advertising goals. The future of advertising belongs to those brands that accept this truth, pursue deeper audience insight, and succeed in embedding not just a product but a believable and inspiring story in the mind and heart of the audience.

Authors' Contributions

Extracted article from the thesis titled "Audience Analysis in the Evolution of Commercial Advertising (Between 2010 and 2020)", Faculty of Art, Shahed University. Authors equally contributed to this article.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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