

## Pathology in Advertising Graphics (Designer, Customer and Audience)

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### **Abstract**

Today advertising graphics in Iran lacks innovation and creativity which can cause change and practical creation as well as beauty and novelty and attractiveness. These works not only are not creative, but also lacks Iranian identity and no track of Iranian great artistic heritage can be observed in these graphic works. With a look at Iran's traditional graphics with such examples as blank designs, tiles, calligraphy, paintings on dishes, clothing, illustration in books and etc. it is found that Iran's current graphics has lost its link to the past and it is in weakness and decline state compared to the past works. Graphics is a triangle with designer, customer and audience as its heads. Creative designers have perfect and accurate look at all aspects. They put value on their artistic sense of discovery and artistic intuition, and at the same time, they are aware of importance of the customer as well as the audience and viewer. Taking these points into account and paying attention to principles for constructing a graphic work and creativity process in designing play crucial role in creating creative and novel works. Some studies have been conducted on investigating relationship between graphics and advertisement; however, pathology of graphics in advertisement and reasons for lack of appropriate influence of advertisement on audience has been understudied. Thus, current work aims at investigating pathology of graphics in advertisement. In other words, the factors which influence failure or low influence of advertisement on the audience will be studied with reliance on three factors, i.e. customer, designer and audience, and finally some solutions will be proposed to overcome these factors.

**Keywords:** Pathology, advertising graphics, graphic designers, Tehran City, audience

### **Introduction**

Graphics as a powerful tool for transferring advertising concepts is commonly used by public relations and advertisement forces. Designers all over the world are present in the advertising centers to express wishes of Ad customers in the form of pictures and graphics. Graphic works has informing aspect for audience and they serve as visual songs of the society. Graphic designers should take into account that to what extent their artistic activity and work can enhance visual culture of the audiences; artistic activity of the graphic designers may strengthen or weakens visual culture of the audiences. The only issue for designers is not satisfaction of owners of power and wealth; rather they should also consider to what extent their visual expression influences visual culture promotion.

Nowadays graphic works influence many people in different sectors including industry, business and cinema. Achieving a proper understanding of the audience and consumption process would bring various benefits for the companies and advertising designers should have proper

understanding about factors which affect consumer needs and demands in order to achieve success in customer attraction process, since majority of people search information about the products before purchase and most part of such information is obtained through advertisement.

Competition in business arena has become increasingly complex and good production and sale is the axis of economic activities. Without doubt, those will win the future who outperform in competition with wisdom, prudence and using the most appropriate methods and tools.

In the current research work, advertising graphics is considered so that damages in this area as reasons that hinder qualitative promotion of advertising graphic works in Iran are investigated. Advertisement has many applications in audience behavior fields. Today completion in the market has got a deeper and more professional meaning and least negligence in keeping pace with audience understanding about advertisement may lead to elimination of the companies from competition circle. Considering completion in the market gets complicated more and more, motivating customers to select a brand with aim of creating loyalty through effective advertising become more important and advertisement cause influence on repetition of purchase, changing purchase habits and customer loyalty. Environmental advertising is advertising that is presented in the public sphere and has its own promotional tools and context.

These works include advertisements on banners, billboards, body of busses and etc. these tools and contexts each has its own function and are used considering the respective location. Since graphic designing is a communicative activity and contains three aspects, environmental graphics can reach to higher levels when elements of this pyramid are informed, i.e. aware customer, aware designer or communicator, and aware audience.

Some studies have been conducted on investigating relationship between graphics and advertisement; however, pathology of graphics in advertisement and reasons for lack of appropriate influence of advertisement on audience has been understudied. Thus, current work aims at investigating pathology of graphics in advertisement. In other words, the factors which influence failure or low influence of advertisement on the audience will be studied with reliance on three factors, i.e. customer, designer and audience, and finally some solutions will be proposed to overcome these factors.

Investigating and studying pathology of advertising graphic art in Iran is one of the main goals of this research study. Also, identifying existing problems in advertising graphics due to customers unaware of the advertisement, identifying problems in advertising graphics due to unaware designers and identifying problems in advertising graphics due to unaware audience are minor goals of the current work.

It is a qualitative research and descriptive – analytical study. Library method was used for data collection, thus necessary information were obtained from books, papers, and research plans in the library.

### **Significance of Study**

There is a severe completion among producers in today world and the difference in the products offered by these producers is low. Thus, the companies should have competitive advantage over the competitors in this environment for success. Meanwhile, advertisement may considerably influence in attracting consumers and studying their behavior. Paying attention to design art and advertising graphics are among the major factors of the sale and success in the business market. Importance of this branch of art is so that in some countries which are not producer, only a good graphic design for an imported product puts them as producers of that product and finally they become exporter. It means that today world does not merely seek for the products and goods; rather it is the art of production which moves the economy.

Locating urban advertisement in western countries may be good example for organized advertisement. Thus, business advertisement should know the market, target and location of advertisement and enjoy appropriate format and image. Environmental advertisement tools such as billboards and stands can be presented in a highly creative manner in the environment. Advertisement industry, with all its background, is yet considered as a young and inexperienced industry in Iran and has not yet found its main functions and despite of crucial need for economic development, it is has been left somehow unknown with many deficiencies. Thus, conducting research work in this regard seems necessary.

### **Data Analysis Method**

First, factor affecting advertisement ineffectiveness will be identified. Then, these factors will be analyzed with reliance on concrete examples. In the end, the solutions for overcoming the problems will be offered.

### **Review of Literature**

View to the art and especially graphics in Iran has taken an imperfect form. One reason for it is novelty of graphics in academic and scientific issues. However, advertising graphics pathology in Iran particularly in Tehran has not been addressed academically. Followings are scarce cases of studies in this regard. *An Introduction to 40s (Solar) Graphics in Iran* is the research work conducted in 2004 in Tehran University by Fazlipour directed with Momayez. Also, Bahrami in his thesis entitled *Investigating Academic Thoughts of Graphics and Its Impact on Labor Market (Problems)* studied the problems in this field. It was conducted in Faculty of Art and Architecture in 2010. The study entitled *Position of Graphic Design in Business Advertising* was conducted in 2008 by Moradi guided by Afsharmohajer in the University of the Arts.

### **Graphics and Communications**

The term Communication, which is used in Communication Sciences, includes various concepts such as transfer and dissemination of knowledge and thought, continuity of thought and public participation and cooperation. In other words, one definition is transfer of knowledge and ideas, emotions, skills, etc. using symbols, words and images that is called communication. Communication was also present in the past in the minds of human beings and the human beings in the old days always sought for establishment of communication which has been developed over the time and included various areas such as cultural, economic, and psychological and etc.

There are three elements in every communicative process which cause communication: Message sender, the message sending tool, and the message receiver, and the message itself is the main axis. In a permanent communicative process, the sender and receiver constantly change their places so that they are informed of the accuracy of message sending for preventing from misunderstanding, and repeat the message, if necessary. "Graphics and urban advertisement is one of the oldest and the most genuine forms of communication [...] urban advertisement is one of the oldest advertisement tools for representing services and products which includes types of posters, billboards, bus body design, cars, displays and advertising shapes" (Kokabi, 2004).

Graphic design as a career was raised since half of the twentieth century. Up to the time, promotions and enforcers of it used "commercial artists". Theses expert artists included: layout artists, typography artists who specified the text and title designs for typesetting, versatile illustrators who did everything from designing mechanical diagrams to fashion design, retouch experts, typesetting designers and those who prepared final design for production. Most of commercial artists such as poster designers integrated many of these skills. "The graphics is raised as the main

media of visual communication in communication era due to specific limitations of written language and inefficiency of words and terms. Presence of other powerful visual media such as satellite, TV, internet, multimedia software and computers not only has not reduced importance of graphics, but also they use graphics as an effective media” (Abdolhoseini, 2006). On the other hand, informing is one of the major dimensions in graphics and advertisement area. “Informing can be the origin of many helps in all fields including urban management and utilization of urban services” (Tajvidi, 2002).

### **Advertising Graphics Pathology in Three Aspects: Designer (with Emphasis on Creativity), Audience, Customer**

**Level of Skill:** having necessary skills and adequate understanding about the path in which we have stepped in and familiarization with its main and constructive elements is fundamental. For example, when a poster is ordered to a graphic designer, he would not be successful if the designer is not aware of all aspects of the work and does not know aesthetic criteria.

**Personal Characteristics:** personal characteristics of each person including assiduity, autonomy, tolerance, patience, risk-taking, passing sense of frustration, and coping with ambiguous situations may considerably influence work creation process. On the other hand, interest in conformity, shyness, disappointment, and lack of motivation weakens creativity and reluctant and frustrated designer creates a low-value work.

**Past Habits:** it should be careful that sometimes repetition of the past habits and old methods shortens creativity boundary and leads to low-value and monotonous outputs. Every work requires passing a new path so that a new creation is achieved by seeking for new solutions.

**Delayed Evaluation:** the brain essentially includes two dimensions, first, judging brain which analysis, compares, and selects. Second, creative brain, which imagines, predicts and creates ideas. It should be careful that creativity is not confined by hasty judgment.

**Motivation:** motivations, both internal and external, always increase one’s creative power. Disappointment is diminished by creating motivation and creative thinking is developed.

**Having Open Mind:** emergence of creative thought is possible at moment. Keep the pencil or the tool for recording the work with yourself all the time so that you can implement your mentality in due time.

**Learning from Errors:** creative thought learns tolerates errors and does not blame errors. Thus, do not be afraid of errors, because sometimes sliding pencil or mixing colors can be a good reason for a different creative look.

**Assiduity and Endeavour:** the mind passes non-creative and repetitive paths without any effort and struggle. However, finding novel solutions and reaching to creative image requires endeavor and assiduity in gathering experiences and information.

**Competition:** most people are not prepared to enter competition and evaluation stage, and this stage sometimes frightens them so that it cause stop in creative thinking, while in advertisement mostly the emphasis is put on wonderful, exciting, fun, and creative methods which result in higher involvement of the audience with the message sender (Sedaghat, 2011).

### **Iran’s Today Graphics and Creativity**

Despite of past attempts and presence of art academies, departments and universities where graphics field is taught, advertising graphics currently in Iran is not in high quality. In other words, it lacks creative power which can result in new discoveries in form and meaning in graphics environment; such creative power which with reliance on Iranian rich artistic background can promote graphics. With a brief look at short history of new advertising graphics in Iran it is clear

that lack of innovation and creation and new fields discovery have been factors for decline of this artistic field in different eras, and in rare cases that novel works by Iranian designers are observed, they have been under influence of Western graphics, and since these changes have not been genuine and lacked basis in Iran, they have had short life and could not be origin for fundamental change in Iran's graphics environment.

Searching about reasons for decline in Iranian graphics is crucial and it may illustrate ambiguities on attitude and addressing to graphic design in Iran. However, the essential question is that why Iran's today graphics is currently in such inappropriate situation, why Iran's today graphics repeats a closed circle and Iranian designers have nothing new and novel in their graphic works despite of rich background.

While Iranian design tradition is so rich that it can serve as a launching platform for establishment of modern schools in graphics and can act as basis for experiments to reach such graphics which is both modern and integrated with domestic culture, then why it is failed.

To find answer for these questions, Iran's today graphics should be recognized and it requires specifying its major characteristics and considering their positive and negative aspects. Shiva, an Iranian graphic designer, believes that the reason for distortions in advertisement and its productions is absence of experts with academic strength in this field and filling this gap by graphic designers (1998).

### **Characteristics of Iranian Contemporary Graphics**

Quality of graphic training in most academic and education centers is low, and while quality is low, the quantity is high. Thus, the result is abundant students which graduate from these centers who have not been trained properly and there is no labor market for them. Most of students of this field do not get familiar with even the general ideas about creativity and creation, and at the best case, they are trained for wondering salient artistic works and creating bungled works. It leads to anarchy and chaos in Iran's graphics and logical planning for enhancing quality of the works gets difficult. Educational programs of the universities add to problems instead of overcoming them. In the university, the students follow monotonous and timeworn curriculums and they have to move within the same framework; such framework which hinders creativity and flourishing.

Extensive use of a tool known as computer is the other characteristic of Iranian graphics. This tool, extensive use of which has recently become prevalent, has caused many changes in the process of designing and implementing graphic works in Iran, and it has brought much criticisms. It is clear that such tool as computer can shorten implementation time for the graphic works, improve implementation quality and make possible much impossibility in the graphics. Now role of designer's character and creativity has become diminished in graphic works because of presence of computer and inappropriate use of it, and it seems as if the designer is a tool in the hand of computer, and computer designers design what they are dictated by the computer and its facilities. In addition, the computer has caused that many non-graphic experts enter working area of graphic experts and boundaries of expertise has been disarranged. Essentially of the graphics problems in Iran is dependency on implementation tools; tools which seems as toe goal rather than the means. Mass production of graphic works in Iran is scattered everywhere and the major characteristics of most of these works are lack of creative and novel thought, being non-professional, and inability in attracting audience. Monthly about 50 posters, 250 journal cover page designs, 400 book cover page designs, tens of symbol designs, hundreds of Ads, thousands of layout designs and etc. are outcome of Iranian professional designers. However, majority of these works do not communicate with the audience and lack desired application, they do not enhance taste of the customers, and these works change aesthetics of the audience and have adverse impact on their taste.

If the identity and association with national characteristics are considered as the artistic criteria, then majority of graphic works in Iran lack identity. Most of Iran's graphic works are imitations of what is seen in foreign books and journals and they rarely refer to the Iran's past artistic traditions. Careless and stereotypical use of such forms as Eslimi and tile designs is the maximum work that most Iranian designers do when using Iranian traditional graphics.

Lack of mutual understanding between designers and customers, lack of realistic view and arrogant view of customers and their needs are other factors for failure of graphic works. Designers consider customers as pesky people, presence of whom hinders creating a successful work, and most customers do not have proper perception of the graphics and expect that the designer implement their ideas and thoughts.

Lack of understanding about image principles and utilization of them by the designers is the other problem in Iran's graphics. Presence of computer and clear implementation of the works cover deficiencies of these works in terms of composition and color and etc.

Inability in psychological understanding about the society and lack of familiarization with audience needs are also problems of the designers. A few numbers of designers are familiar with various aspects of the society culture and use of them. Iranian history, literature, proverbs and past artistic tradition are unknown for majority of the designers. Graphic designer is someone who finds out his works should be comprehensible for the public and it requires having adequate understanding about the public people and the context in which their thoughts, culture and tastes develop.

Since advertisement lacks professional experts in Iran, designing messages is mostly done by graphic experts, who are absorbed by the labor market following passing educational courses on art fields. Although they pass such courses as painting, art principles and illustration, they are unfamiliar with an important branch of communication sciences, i.e. communication and audience recognition. This unfamiliarity moves advertisement generally toward stereotyping and repetition, and finally it leads to indifference of the audience to the designs. Major part of urban advertisement in Iran is accomplished by graphic experts; the experts who attempt to encourage consuming a specific product with designing advertising design or making cities colorful, even if these colors are only black and white. Generally urban advertising is composed of two elements; image and letters. However, what is observed in urban advertising in Iran is mostly environmental advertisement and visual advertisement. Majority of designers believe that the image has deepest and the most stable primary influence on the viewer. Also, image is able to express abstract concepts such as beauty and faith.

### **Anarchism in Advertisement Area**

Advertisement is a general term meaning notification and informing and sending message to the public people in the society. "Generally advertisement can be considered as sending message to others via communicating in order to make change in the knowledge, attitude and behavior of audiences which is associated with three elements; receiver of message (audience), sender of message (media), and message content" (Afsharmohajer, 2008). Current regulations in advertisement monitor content of promotional designs and texts, which has been notified in 12 provisions by Ministry of Culture and Islamic Promotion (Article 9; Principles and Policies for Implementing Ads). This article acknowledges:

Promotional organizations and institutions which broadcast Ads should observe following points in setting their advertisements: A. Promotional Ads should be in accordance with legal and juridical rules of the country. B. Use of images and titles of national authorities as well as religious leaders and national historical and cultural figures in Ads aiming at presenting consuming goods and

similar services is banned. C. Ads should not devalue services or products of others. D. Non-provable arguments and misleading materials should not be included in Ads. E. Ads should not include content with speech or picture against morals and public order. F. Scientific sources cannot be quoted in Ads which are not proved by reliable scientific sources. G. Promoting commercial products and services is banned in kindergartens, schools, universities and religious locations. H. belittlement and scoffing others explicitly or implicitly is banned in Ads. I. Use of Women's pictures is severely banned in Ads. J. Advertising all foreign products that their counterparts are domestically produced should not be so that leads to weakening domestic products. K. In use of letters, Persian language should have priority over other languages. L. Ads should be in line with promotion and enhancement of production competition and increasing standard quality. It is evident there are also ambiguities in these rules and regulations which require more clarification.

### **Role of Audience**

In most cases, designer and customer get involved in the matter without taking audience into account. Designers should support the audience, but unfortunately it is not so in most cases. Designers mostly think of their style rather than thinking of legibility and comprehensibility of their work. If the style was the only factor for attracting attention of audience (sometimes it is true), there was no problem. However, often the purpose is that the audience comprehends the work and communicates with it. It is not achieved unless the designer recognizes the audience, perceives his sensitivity, and put himself in shoes of the audience.

Iranian designers should consider considerable importance for the role of audience in creation process for a graphic work. Graphics is an applied art and should communicate with the audience and additionally it should increase taste and knowledge of the audience. But what should be done so that the audience shows attention to the graphic work despite of abundant distorting factors. Many factors can be mentioned which influence attracting attention of the audience. Mental background and previous familiarity, false or true need, and personal interest are effective factors. However, the most effective factor, which almost all people react to it, is presence of a creative idea and novel thought in the graphic work. This idea can be clear and explicit proportionate with the subject and type of the graphic work, or it may be presented gradually. Anyway, if it is absent, the graphic work would fail in attracting attention of public and non-professional audience. Appropriate coloring, perfect composition, high printing quality, typesetting, legibility and other factors of graphic work creation are in the next place of importance.

### **Designer and Illustrator (Strengthening Idea, Paying Attention to Details and Evaluating Graphic Work)**

There is no well-defined relationship between designer and illustrator in Iran and most designers are not aware of the significant of illustrator and his work. Use of abilities of the illustrator may increase capabilities and effectiveness of the designer. The designer can set his cooperation with illustrator in such a way that a creative outcome is obtained. These points can be useful in mutual cooperation of designer and illustrator.

Following alignment of ideas with the goal, it is necessary to evaluate their sustainability against invasion of other communicative and graphic works. Communication has turned to a delicate, competitive, busy and confusing world. Audiences of graphic works now view films which are full of delicate and complicated images and sounds. Today audience lives in a world where music is a mixture of influences of various global cultures. The music even can be created by the computer. Internet, fax, modem, and satellite have dominated personal and professional communications. Now it is possible to distinguish real and digital images and sounds. This busy and

noisy world has influenced audiences of graphics. For example, reading level is very low in Iran and most people in the society watch TV over half of their times. People have lost their sensitivity toward visual messages due to invasion of information. Then, how it is possible to communicate with a special group of people which have been selected as the audience by the employee for a specific order? How the message can be transferred in this busy environment? How the message can be transferred to the audience with such visual and audio pollutions?

Success of a good idea depends on its implementation. Successful implementation of a creative idea shows that the idea was a genuine one at the time of creation and discovery. Implementation and utilization of a good idea requires the same creativity which was used in its discovery. The key to creative implementation is careful attention to an element of visual communication. Nothing should hinder acceptance of idea by the audience. Careless implementation, bad printing, inappropriate letter design, or poor edition and modifications may distort mind of the audience and prevent from successful communication with him. Although common sense prevents from these cases, many points may be overlooked at the final hours of completion of the work.

### **Problems of Graphic Designers**

There are two clear reasons for inadequacy and inability of the approach of the artists. First, in applied arts such as graphics rarely intuition and inspiration occurs randomly, and intuition and inspiration mostly occurs in mere and non-applied arts such as painting and music; the arts with less limitations. If it is to impose limitations on these arts, less intuition and discovery would happen due to confinement of the artist mind. Second, no designer can expect moments of ideas and inspiration due to inherent characteristics of graphics. Graphics has some limitations such as duration of work implementation and ideas and tastes of customer because of its applied nature. It shows necessity for a logical process to achieve the best outcome at the specific time within specific range in creation of graphic work.

### **Preparation for Taking Ideas**

Achieving a successful graphic design is not only subject to having creating mind, rather successful designers communicate with the customer in such a way that as if their mental imagination is exactly the same as what the customer seeks for it. Successful designers present their ideas so that the customer sees, accepts, and perceives then and finally acknowledge their innovative imagination. It provides such space for the designer that he implements his ideas easily and successfully. To this end, the customer should be recognized, his needs should be perceived, and he should be communicated so that ideas and attitude of the designer are in line with the customer's expectations.

### **Recognizing Customer**

Designers often view customer as the person whose function is just giving money and does not know anything about creativity and realization of the idea. Most designers consider the customer as a pesky person which should be released from whom. Such narrow view of the customer is harmful for the designer. Unlike perception and bias of these designers, customer can be a useful person in creation process of a graphic work. Good or bad customer decides logically or illogically, evaluates, judges, and approves. Of course, the person who is talked with about the designer may not be the customer and he may be just transferor of the main customer messages. It is necessary that designer finds a way to approach the main decision maker. The more is distance between designer and customer in terms of physical, feeling or location, the work would be more difficult.

### **Iranian Design Tradition**

Iranian designers have great heritage of artistic ideas, sources, and perspectives which is Iranian design tradition. They can create novel works with Iranian identity by creative use of such heritage. However, on the other hand, it should be considered that creating the identity in graphics is different from exhuming this art. Giving identity to the work is much deeper and implicit than that designer adds some Iranian lines and colors with no connection to a work forcibly. It is better to consider integration of visual traditions and contemporary graphics with more contemplation. In other words, addition and integration of some traditional designs such as Eslimi, decorated forms used in architecture, traditional arts and etc. with graphical methods, which is often done for observing ideas of customer, cannot make change in graphics art or take national color, rather finally vapid stereotypes would be common with no sign of artistic creativity from graphic expert in them, and they will be nothing except obstacle for genuine and creative search and discovery.

### **Developing Design Regulations**

The goal gives a list of visual regulations which can be used for connecting customer, audience, specialized language and design language. In other words, the design can take agreed goals and put them in the form of terms which are meaningful for it. Design regulations help the designer to reduce choices and focus on creative attitudes. Design regulations helps taking specific information and information related to design from the customer. Design regulations are collection of all visual and verbal characteristics which are dictated by the goal and directly affect attitude of the design. That is, these factors are affected: the size and its dimensions, implementation factors and method, qualitative factors which affect the audience, practical factors and factors related to the goal which affect the audience, practicality and sustainability, factors related to budget and timing. Some designs have very simple design regulations which can be summarized within the preliminary discussions. More extensive designs force the designer to review the information archives, analyze the goal of design, and summarize regulations of design for review of the customer. This process helps customer to perceive influence of the goals.

### **Conclusion**

Considering economic issues, one of the matters in the current living conditions which can help us is playing proper, timely and effective role of the advertisement. Unfortunately, the advertisement and its research work as well as its role and significance in the country's economy have not been considered up to now. Also, academic education of advertisement and regulation of advertising activities have not been studied and even we could not realistically criticize advertisement and performance of advertisers.

Findings in the current work suggest that part of the problems is related to the management. It is frequently observed that novel designs are rejected by non-expert people in the public sector, while these people lack necessary knowledge and skill for approval or rejection of such works. If graphic designers are appropriately active in the country and have necessary knowledge and skill, it does not suffice and no problem is solved. All three dimensions of the pyramid should be considered so that the problems can be overcome. The other part is related to the designers and graphic experts. Designers are mostly imitators of western models. By promotion of a special design approach, they rapidly use it in their works. However, the advertisement challenge in our country is generally lack of planning at macro level for organizing advertising, anarchy in urban advertising and scientific relative weakness in this area.

In addition, designers should consider the point that no one becomes designer theoretically; art should be achieved in practical attempts. Skilled human resources should take necessary

expertise in higher education centers and learn advertisement in practical way. Presence of experienced professors and expert people in higher education centers may provide necessary knowledge and skills for the students. More appropriate context can be prepared for the advertisement with making culture in the audiences.

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