



# The Effects of Global Pandemic on Regional Televisions: A Critical Study of Media Production, Advertising Strategies, and Revenue Generation

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the dynamics of media revenue generation, advertising practices, and content production, with a particular focus on critically analyzing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on local television broadcasters. The primary objective is to assess both the positive and negative effects of the global pandemic on production activities, advertisement broadcasting, and revenue streams of Kurdish television channels, especially during the lockdown period imposed by the Kurdistan Regional Government between March 14 and 1 May 2020. To achieve this aim, the study employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The research sample included 98 media professionals and journalists, four advertising production companies with prior experience in drama production, and three Kurdish television channels (both satellite and terrestrial). Finally, findings reveal a direct correlation between mobility restrictions and market-related activities during the pandemic. Media professionals and journalists experienced more severe disruptions compared to advertising company executives and TV channel administrators. The production capacity of major companies (such as Suli Media, AD Media, Unik Engine, and Start Center) was significantly hindered, particularly concerning large-scale video projects. Furthermore, the financial impact was more pronounced among terrestrial broadcasters (e.g., Falcon TVs) than among satellite channels (e.g., Payam, NRT), especially concerning advertising revenue losses. More interestingly, these outcomes diverge from the prevailing perceptions among media practitioners, many of whom view the pandemic's adverse effects as a global potential threat to the long-term viability and quality of local Kurdish television broadcasting.

**Keywords:** Global Pandemic, Coronavirus disease, Advertising Strategies, Revenue Generation, and TV Channels.

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## 1. RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

Following the end of the bipolar global order defined by the rivalry between the liberal bloc led by the United States and the socialist bloc under the former Soviet Union, the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) marked the first global crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the potential to catalyze a fundamental reconfiguration of the international system. In this context, the People's Republic of China appeared poised to challenge U.S. global dominance, sparking concerns in Washington about the erosion of its unipolar supremacy in the post-Cold War era [1], [2]. This geopolitical tension was mirrored in academic discourse, which shifted focus from traditional economic concerns such as oil price fluctuations to emerging conspiracy theories, (such as claims that the virus was artificially

engineered in a laboratory) and the strategic use of media narratives in what some viewed as a new iteration of Cold War rivalry between global powers. Simultaneously, the outbreak of COVID-19 triggered significant transformations within the global media landscape. Media outlets, which rely heavily on advertising revenues and consistent production cycles, were compelled to reassess their financial and operational structures in response to the global pandemic's disruptions. Local, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq was no exception, in an effort to curb the virus's spread, the regional government implemented a strict curfew and lockdown from 14 March to 1 May 2020. These public health measures profoundly affected both public and private sectors, particularly the media and marketing industries.

This situation created a unique opportunity for academic inquiry into the broader socio-economic and institutional consequences of the pandemic, especially in relation to the media production ecosystem [3],[4],[5],[6],[7]. This study seeks to explore the interconnections between human behavior, market dynamics, income levels, and advertising production in the Kurdistan Region during the pandemic. Specifically, it aims to assess the impact of COVID-19 global pandemic on advertising output among local production companies and to analyze the extent to which Kurdish television terrestrial and satellite channels were affected in terms of revenue generation. In this context, the research is guided by three central questions:

1. What was the relationship between consumer behavior and market trends in the Kurdistan Region before, during, and after the COVID-19 outbreak and related travel restrictions?
2. To what extent did the pandemic and mobility limitations influence the production and distribution capacity of advertising companies such as Suli Media, ID Media, Unique Engine, and Start Center?
3. How did the spread of the COVID-19 global pandemic and the implementation of lockdown measures affect the revenue streams of Kurdish television channels, including NRT, Payam, and Falcon?

Beyond the introductory section and a review of the relevant literature, the study is structured into four main parts. The first section outlines the research background, along with objectives, and questions. The second details the tools and theoretical frameworks applied in the analysis. The third and fourth sections focus on data analysis methods and findings. Finally, the fifth section interprets the results in light of the research objectives and offers practical recommendations.

## 2. RESEARCH THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretically, a review of prior English-language literature reveals several pertinent studies that inform the theoretical grounding of this research. One foundational study investigates the global economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and its significant human toll. This study focused on nations struggling to manage the virus's spread and aimed to assess its ramifications for economic systems, including markets, supply chains, and manufacturing sectors. Key driving variables included movement restrictions, stay-at-home mandates, reductions in personal income amid economic uncertainty, and shifts in consumer behavior, where individuals prioritized essential goods over non-essentials due to fears of contagion [8]. Another relevant study conducted in East Asia, and supported by Nielsen Global Media, examined the pandemic's influence on media operations and advertising practices. It highlighted a marked increase in media consumption that ranged from 60% to 80% during periods of social distancing. This surge benefitted content providers but simultaneously created challenges for advertisers and media proprietors, as advertising budgets were slashed and production of new content became financially strained. A third line of inquiry explored the pandemic's economic burden on media organizations and the expected role of governments in sustaining advertising markets. As state-affiliated media outlets struggled to function without ad revenue (advertisers withheld spending due to diminished demand), and media organizations, particularly those dependent on entertainment and sports programming, experienced severe financial strain.

Together, these studies contribute significantly to the conceptual foundation of the present research, particularly in terms of understanding COVID-19 as a global pandemic and pivotal disruptor to media and marketing systems. They also underscore a notable shift towards digital and social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, at the expense of traditional outlets like radio and print, which experienced substantial declines in advertising revenues. These works collectively contextualize the pandemic's influence on media practices at local, regional, and global levels. Building on this theoretical base, the current research investigates the consequences of COVID-19 for advertising companies and the broader advertising industry, with specific focus on revenue streams of Kurdish television channels in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This study aims to deepen the understanding of how the pandemic has reshaped local advertising ecosystems, incorporating theoretical models from the existing literature. This involves a critical assessment of evolving consumer behavior, changes in media consumption patterns, and the financial burden experienced by advertising-dependent enterprises. Through this lens, the research seeks to conceptualize the intersection of media, advertising, and economic development during times of crisis, particularly in the Iraqi Kurdish context [9], [10], [11].

### 2.1 The Global Pandemic of COVID-19 and its Effects

Historically, societies have confronted various viral outbreaks, but COVID-19 stands as one of the most significant global pandemics or health crises of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019, the virus rapidly spread to over 213 countries and territories. The World Health Organization (WHO) subsequently declared it a global health emergency [12], [13]. The virus disproportionately affected individuals with pre-existing medical conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, and chronic respiratory illnesses, as well as elderly and immunocompromised populations. Transmission primarily occurs via respiratory droplets, making hygiene protocols, social distancing, and quarantine measures essential containment tools [14]. Despite progress in vaccine development, the emergence of new variants continues to complicate global mitigation efforts. COVID-19 has underscored the intricate link between public health, economic stability, and media practices [15]. Media outlets have played a crucial role in shaping public perception and communicating preventive strategies, thus influencing collective behavior. As the pandemic altered all facets of daily life, media consumption surged due to lockdowns and heightened demand for information and entertainment. Research shows that 80%–90% of global populations have turned to media for pandemic-related updates, driven by restricted mobility, social isolation, and an increased appetite for timely information. This upsurge in demand has catalyzed the proliferation of digital and social media platforms. Social media, in particular, has emerged as a vital channel of communication amid limited face-to-face interactions, offering businesses new avenues for digital advertising and outreach. However, this digital shift has introduced structural and financial challenges for media institutions [16], [17]. The transition has necessitated innovative business models in a competitive attention economy. Sports and entertainment programming (key drivers of advertising revenue) were particularly hard hit due to event cancellations, such as the postponement of the Olympics.

As the crisis prolonged, advertisers faced shrinking budgets while simultaneously attempting to engage audiences inundated with pandemic-related media. The pandemic's financial impact led to reduced advertising expenditures across sectors, directly affecting media income [18], [19], [20]. Disruptions to global supply chains further undermined corporate ad spending, compelling media organizations, especially those reliant on advertising, to revise financial forecasts and adapt to an increasingly uncertain environment [21]. In summary, global pandemic of COVID-19 has had a profound impact on media consumption patterns and advertising distribution. Although digital media platforms continue to attract substantial user engagement, managing revenue models and enhancing advertising efficiency remain ongoing concerns. The pandemic has not only transformed how media is consumed and monetized but also exposed underlying vulnerabilities in media business models. Accordingly, the evolving media landscape demands strategic adaptation from industry stakeholders [22], [23].

## 2.2 Advertising Strategies and Media Businesses during the Global Pandemic of COVID-19

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has significantly reshaped the landscape of advertising and media, prompting a rapid shift in how messages and products are marketed. Media and marketing sectors swiftly adopted innovative approaches to remain relevant, with digital advertising emerging as a central revenue stream amid the global pivot to online platforms. This transition raised critical questions regarding how advertising content should be crafted to align with the altered consumer mindset and economic realities post-pandemic. Advertising messages underwent substantial transformation to address growing public concerns around health, safety, and social responsibility. Audiences increasingly demanded content that was both informative and empathetic [24], [25]. As a result, traditional media formats (such as print, television, and radio) experienced a decline in dominance, while interactive and digital platforms, particularly social media, became essential tools for advertisers to connect with consumers. The surge in social media users created expanded opportunities for businesses to directly engage with targeted demographics. However, with heightened economic uncertainty, advertising strategies shifted towards cost-effective and highly targeted campaigns. Companies focused on maximizing returns on limited advertising budgets by employing data-driven approaches. As Peter (2008) notes, advertising serves not only to promote sales but also to maintain brand visibility during periods of market disruption [26]. Thus, messaging strategies increasingly emphasized brand values, trust-building, and consumer engagement rather than short-term sales goals. Moreover, advertising content had to adapt to evolving global narratives. Effective advertisements were those that resonated with consumer emotions and values, reflecting societal changes brought about by the pandemic. In an environment shaped by smart technologies and expanded social media influence, advertisers gained enhanced capabilities to personalize content based on specific consumer profiles, such as age, location, and behavioral patterns. This context demanded agility, empathy, and awareness from advertising professionals, who were expected to respond to the psychological and emotional consequences of the pandemic in their messaging. Marketing efforts thus evolved beyond transactional objectives, aiming instead to forge genuine connections with audiences.

As emphasized by Aivas (2025b) and Yaqub (2024), success in this era of information abundance requires leveraging available data to deliver human-centered, contextually relevant communication [27], [28].

## 2.3 The Global Pandemic of COVID-19 and Distribution of Advertising and Television Revenues in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the media sector, particularly television, demonstrates a relatively transparent operational structure [29]. Advertising constitutes the primary financial backbone for many media outlets, facilitating economic diversification through various revenue channels. These include advertisement sales, media product distribution, private sponsorship, governmental funding, NGO and international organization support, audience-based contributions, and community-targeted initiatives. The Kurdistan Region, as a semi-autonomous legal entity recognized under Article 117 of the Iraqi Constitution, possesses its governance structure. Consequently, media operations are influenced by a mix of legislative, executive, and judicial powers. However, political leadership and party affiliations play a significant role, especially during critical events such as elections or political crises. Many television channels depend heavily on administrative and financial support from political parties, often functioning as instruments of partisan messaging. This political-economic nexus has enabled direct influence over both media content and advertising strategies, with many channels prioritizing the interests of their financial backers [30]. The COVID-19 pandemic further impacted this dynamic, altering how media organizations approach advertising in light of shifting consumer behaviors and fiscal constraints. Television channels in the Kurdistan Region can generally be categorized into three types based on their advertising revenue structures: [31]

**1. Independent Commercial Channels** – These channels, including outlets such as "Kurdistan TV," "NRT," and "Kurdistan 24," primarily rely on advertising and media product sales. Their political affiliations are minimal, and they strive to generate revenue through standard commercial practices.

**2. Politically or Business-Affiliated Channels** – Outlets in this category, like "NRT," "Kurdistan 24," and "Rudaw," are supported by political figures or business entities. While advertising remains a major income source, their operations are significantly sustained through sponsorships and funding from affiliated actors.

**3. Regional or Niche Commercial Channels** – These are smaller-scale, commercially driven media entities such as "Falcon TV," which function independently of political structures and derive revenue solely through advertising tied to their associated business ventures.

Ultimately, the financial model of the media in the Kurdistan Region is intricately tied to political influence, with advertisement revenue often reflecting the interests of those in control [32]. As Palani et al. (2025) argue, financial control in the media sector typically coincides with political loyalty, reinforcing the instrumentalization of advertising for political objectives [33]. The interplay between funding sources and content production has consequently shaped the advertising environment, with political and commercial interests heavily influencing both message framing and revenue distribution.



As Aivas et al (2025) observe, the sustainability of advertising in Kurdish media is closely aligned with the perceived mutual benefits between political entities and business stakeholders [34].

### 3. RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION

This section outlines the methodological foundation of the study, articulating its significance, research objectives, guiding questions, and the procedures employed in data collection and analysis. It serves as a gateway into the core aspects of the research by clarifying the title, scope, and content, as well as identifying the target population and sampling framework. The selection of the research title: "The Effects of Global Pandemic on Regional Televisions: A Critical Study of Media Production, Advertising Strategies, and Revenue Generation" is driven by several compelling factors. Chief among these is the global spread of COVID-19, which brought unprecedented disruptions and heightened awareness across countries. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), along with its provinces, cities, and towns, presents a suitable context for this investigation due to the region's evolving media environment and the proliferation of COVID-related academic discourse. Without a systematic study of this phenomenon, any institutional or policy response risks being fragmented or inadequate. The imposition of nationwide lockdowns and movement restrictions by governments worldwide, including the KRG, in response to the pandemic has further shaped the research's conceptual focus. These conditions created a unique environment for examining changes in advertising strategies and media production, particularly among Kurdish television channels. Consequently, this study seeks to analyze trends in advertising markets, production outputs, and revenue models of advertising companies operating within this evolving media ecosystem. The study is particularly relevant in light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including its economic repercussions on media revenues and broadcast content. Moreover, this research represents one of the first Kurdish-language studies to explore these dimensions, contributing foundational insights that may serve as a springboard for further academic work. It also examines the interconnectedness between public mobility restrictions, market activity, and revenue fluctuations within the advertising and broadcasting sectors. The findings are expected to be beneficial to media owners, advertising producers, and policymakers by identifying alternative income strategies and enhancing financial sustainability under crisis conditions.

#### 3.1 Research Methodology Tools

To obtain empirical data, the study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and semi-structured interviews. A digital questionnaire was created using Google Forms, allowing for wide dissemination and efficient data collection. The survey was distributed via email and through social media platforms such as Facebook, Viber, and WhatsApp, to ensure accessibility and broad participation. Data collection was conducted over 10 days, from 03 April to 13 April 2020. In total, 151 responses were initially received. Upon review, it was determined that 20 forms were incomplete, either due to unanswered questions or technical issues, leaving 131 fully completed surveys. After further review based on respondents' journalistic experience (specifically those with less than one year of professional exposure), 33 additional responses were excluded, resulting in 98 valid responses for analysis.

These participants typically had limited interaction with advertising or media revenue operations, thus affecting the relevancy of their data. In addition to survey responses, interviews were conducted with representatives from four advertising agencies and three Kurdish television stations (both satellite and terrestrial). These qualitative interviews provided deeper insight into the research objectives, with data collection continuing up to October 2023 (see the Research Appendix).

#### 3.2 Research Scope

The geographical scope of this research includes the four provinces of the Kurdistan Region, such as Duhok, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Halabja, as well as the autonomous administrations of Raparin and Garmiyan. The temporal scope is defined by the critical early phase of the COVID-19 outbreak, specifically from 14 March to 1 April 2020, during which the Kurdistan Regional Government imposed a series of travel bans and lockdown measures. All individuals surveyed or interviewed resided in these regions and participated in the study during the designated timeframe. From a media perspective, the study focuses on Kurdish television channels operating within the geographical boundaries of the Kurdistan Region, assessing the impact of pandemic-related measures on advertising distribution and broadcast activity.

#### 3.3 Research Population Sampling

The target population includes media professionals in the Kurdistan Region, including journalists across various media outlets, as well as managers of advertising agencies and television broadcasters. Selection criteria for participants included variables such as age, gender, location, level of education, professional experience, and current workplace. A random sampling technique was used for survey distribution, resulting in a final dataset of 98 valid respondents. For interviews, a purposive (intentional) sampling strategy was employed, targeting key stakeholders from four advertising agencies, such as Suli Media, AD Media, Uniq Engine, and Start Center, along with three TV channels, including Falcon TV, NRT, and Peyam TV. Most of which are based in Sulaymani province. These entities were selected due to their local relevance, accessibility, and willingness to participate within the research timeline. To enhance the robustness of the data, these organizations were chosen to represent a diverse cross-section of the media and advertising landscape in the region, both in terms of ownership and operational strategy. Although a broader sample from other provinces was initially considered, time constraints and logistical challenges necessitated a narrower focus. Nevertheless, the study offers a comprehensive and localized understanding of the pandemic's effect on media advertising and revenue generation.

### 4. RESEARCH DATA ANALYSIS

This section outlines the analytical approaches employed to synthesize the collected research data and derive meaningful findings. The integration and interpretation of data were informed by both academic and professional insights, with researchers' practical experiences and reflections on the challenges encountered during the research process playing a critical role in ensuring the coherence and relevance of the results [35], [36], [37]. The professional backgrounds of participating journalists and academic researchers significantly contributed to identifying the core issues under investigation, shaping the data collection phases, and highlighting the operational limitations faced by television broadcasters and

advertisers [38]. These contributions were particularly valuable in the context of the Kurdistan Region, where media practices are shaped by a complex interplay of local, regional, and global disruptions, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic. The unprecedented crisis posed unique analytical challenges. The post-pandemic media landscape necessitated recalibrating the analytical lens to account for shifting operational realities while maintaining a clear focus on advertising revenues and media dissemination strategies [39], [40]. As such, the research methodology was refined through collaborative engagement with media experts and academic scholars, enabling a more nuanced analysis of the structural and contextual factors influencing television advertising in the region. This integrative approach allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the limitations confronting media organizations, particularly concerning their financial sustainability and adaptability during crises. It also facilitated an exploration of the evolving relationship between media outlets and their revenue sources, offering critical insights into how media systems respond to economic and societal pressures in times of global uncertainty [41].

#### 4.1 Data Cleaning and Refinement of Findings

This section details the methodological procedures employed in conducting the study and the systematic approach used to achieve reliable results. The analysis of findings was refined through the integration of consolidated data, processed within a structured analytical framework [42], [43], [44]. At the preliminary stage of the research, a total of 98 survey forms were compiled in collaboration with advertising companies. Additionally, three consultative meetings were held with representatives from Kurdish television broadcasters (both regional and satellite-based) to help define a representative and purposive sample. The raw data collected through the survey was initially organized and structured. The responses were systematically sorted, beginning with demographic information provided by the participants (mainly journalists). The survey data (comprising both quantitative and qualitative inputs) was then processed and represented through descriptive narratives and visual formats, including tables and charts. Subsequent analysis focused on interpreting survey responses concerning insights gathered from advertising firms and Kurdish television channels, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the media and advertising landscape under investigation [45].

#### 4.2 Analysis of Journalists, Media Professionals, and Data Refinement

This section focuses on analysing the survey responses of media professionals and journalists within the Kurdistan Region, based on variables such as gender, academic background, age, journalistic experience, and the type of media outlet in which they work (traditional vs. digital). The aim was to assess how these variables influence participants' perspectives on the research questions. Data were collected primarily through surveys and follow-up interviews with a purposive sample of Kurdish communication professionals.

**1. Gender Distribution:** The data indicate that 79.6% of respondents were male, while 20.4% were female, reflecting participation from both genders in the research process. This gender imbalance likely reflects broader societal and cultural dynamics in the region that limit women's participation in the media sector. Factors such as familial restrictions and cultural norms often constrain women's access to journalism careers.

In some cases, women are allowed to work before marriage but are expected to withdraw afterward, either voluntarily or due to familial pressure.

**2. Age of Participants:** 40.8% of participants were between 26 and 33 years old, representing the most dominant age group. This is followed by those aged 34 years and older at 37.8%, while 21.4% of respondents fell within the 18–25 age range. This age distribution indicates that the majority of respondents were mature professionals, with considerable potential to contribute meaningful insights to the study.

**3. Educational Background:** A significant proportion of participants (39.8%) hold a bachelor's degree, making it the most common level of education. An additional 31.6% have completed a diploma or two-year postgraduate program, suggesting that nearly half of the sample consists of technically or professionally trained individuals. Furthermore, 8.2% of respondents reported holding a master's degree, while 4.1% had completed only preparatory education (grades 1–9). A small minority (1%) possessed a Ph.D. Respondents lacking formal academic credentials were excluded from this study. These findings indicate that approximately 9% of the sample holds postgraduate qualifications. This relatively high level of academic attainment among media professionals in the Kurdistan Region could promote greater adherence to ethical and legal standards in journalism. It also enhances the reliability of the responses, as more educated participants are likely to offer well-informed and reflective input.

**4. Journalistic Experience:** 51% of participants have over 11 years of experience in the field, signifying substantial professional expertise. Another 49% reported between 2 and 10 years of experience, confirming that nearly all respondents are seasoned journalists. Only a small portion (5%) had less than a year of experience; due to their limited industry knowledge and exposure, their responses were excluded from the final analysis. The rationale for this exclusion is that individuals with less than one year of experience are unlikely to possess the contextual and financial understanding required to fully engage with topics such as media ownership and advertising revenue streams.

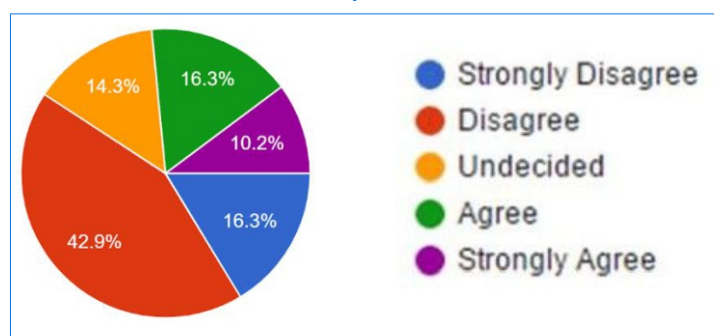
**5. Geographical Distribution:** The geographic origins of the participants. The majority resided in Sulaymaniyah Governorate (34.7%), followed by Duhok (33.7%), Erbil (25.5%), Raparin (3%), Halabja (2%), and Garmian (1%). Although the researchers aimed for broad representation across the Kurdistan Region's four governorates and two autonomous administrations, several limitations were encountered. These included non-responses, technical errors, and incomplete surveys, particularly from individuals with limited journalism experience. As a result, over 50 forms, mostly from Duhok and Erbil, were omitted from the final dataset. Low response rates from Halabja, Garmian, and Raparin may also be attributed to infrastructural challenges and limited internet accessibility in these more remote regions.

**6. Professional Media Affiliation:** The analysis of professional affiliation, detailed in Table 6, reveals that 50% of participants were employed in visual/television media (satellite or terrestrial). This was followed by electronic media (24.5%), print media (13.3%), radio/audio media (7.1%), and government communication departments (5.1%).

Collectively, more than 95% of respondents were active professionals within the media sector, reinforcing the credibility of the data. These findings confirm that participant insights are grounded in first-hand, practical experience within the industry.

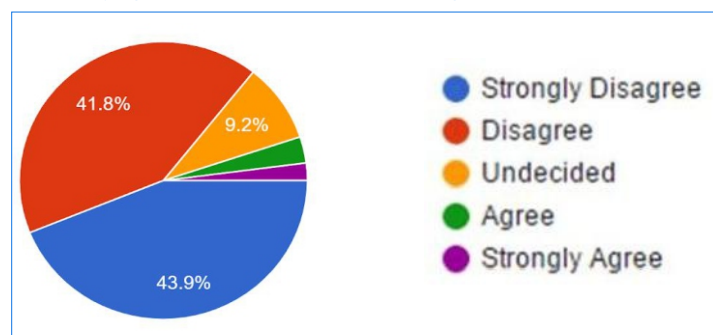
**7. Prolonged COVID-19 Effects on Advertising Revenue:** Data presented in Table 01 highlights a significant concern among media professionals regarding the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on advertising income. According to the findings, 42.9% of respondents acknowledge that the ongoing nature of the global pandemic and the extension of travel restrictions within the Kurdistan Region have compelled Kurdish media institutions to explore alternative revenue streams. Notably, an equal proportion of participants (16.3%) each either "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with this perspective, indicating a shared level of apprehension. Meanwhile, 14.3% of respondents remain uncertain about the extent of this impact, and only 10.2% completely disagree with the statement. Overall, the data reveals that 59.2% of participants agree with the notion to varying degrees, while 40.8% do not, suggesting a noticeable split in opinion. Nonetheless, there appears to be a consensus that the pandemic has disrupted traditional advertising models, necessitating a diversification of income sources for media outlets.

*Table 01: The continuation of the coronavirus pandemic and travel restrictions forces media outlets to seek alternative sources of income*



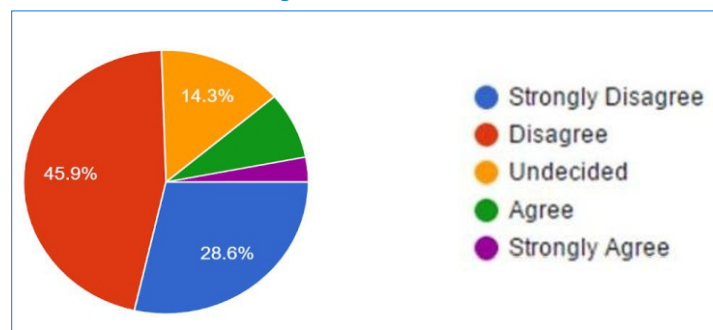
**8. The Effect of COVID-19 on Advertising Productions:** Table 02 illustrates that 43.9% of survey respondents "Strongly Agree" that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced the volume of advertising for Kurdish goods and products within the Kurdistan Region. This perspective is further supported by 41.8% of participants who also "Agree" with the statement, forming a substantial majority. Conversely, 9.2% of respondents express "Uncertainty", while only a small fraction (3.1%) "Disagree" and 2% "Strongly Disagree". These variations in opinion align with fundamental economic principles, particularly the relationship between supply and demand. In conditions where mobility and distribution channels are restricted, consumer demand naturally diminishes. Consequently, commercial enterprises may perceive limited value in allocating resources to advertising or product promotion, regardless of their financial capacity to do so.

*Table 02: The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the level of Kurdish advertising production for goods and products in the Kurdistan Region*



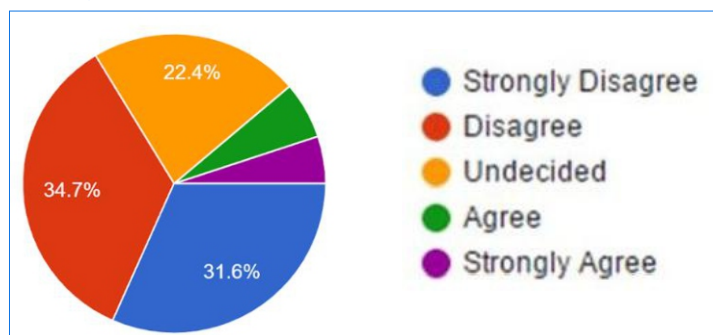
**9. The Effect of COVID-19 on Advertising Revenue:** According to Table 03 the global pandemic of COVID-19 has had a discernible effect on the advertising revenue of Kurdish media outlets in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. A substantial proportion of respondents (45.9%) "Agree" that the pandemic negatively influenced advertising income, highlighting a prominent concern among Kurdish media professionals. Moreover, 28.6% of participants "Strongly Agree" with this assessment, whereas 14.3% remain "Uncertain". In contrast, a smaller segment (8.2%) "Disagree" and 3.1% "Strongly Disagree" with the statement. These findings underscore the broader economic repercussions of a global crisis like COVID-19, particularly its adverse effect on media organizations that rely heavily on advertising as a primary source of income. As a result, media proprietors are being compelled to re-evaluate and modify their operational strategies, which may include substantial changes in content production and distribution practices, thereby influencing the overall flow and quality of media messaging.

*Table 03: The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the advertising revenue of Kurdish media outlets in the Kurdistan Region*

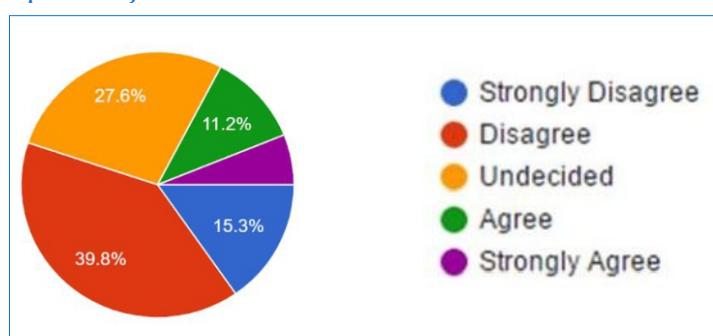


**10. The Effect of COVID-19 on Media Institutions:** Table 04 reveals that 34.7% of respondents "Agree" that the global pandemic of COVID-19 has adversely affected Iraqi Kurdish media outlets in the Kurdistan Region, resulting in financial instability and a decline in revenue. This view is further reinforced by 31.6% of participants who "Strongly agree," indicating that over 65% of the respondents support this perspective. In contrast, 22.4% remain neutral, while a minority (6.1%) "Disagree" and 5.1% "Strongly Disagree". These findings challenge the prevailing assumption that most Kurdish media outlets are financially secure due to their affiliations with political parties or senior government officials, who are typically viewed as primary sources of financial backing. If that assumption were accurate, pandemic-related disruptions would have had minimal impact on advertising and media production. However, the survey responses from representatives of Iraqi Kurdish television stations suggest otherwise, highlighting the pandemic's significant role in disrupting media finances regardless of political or institutional affiliations.



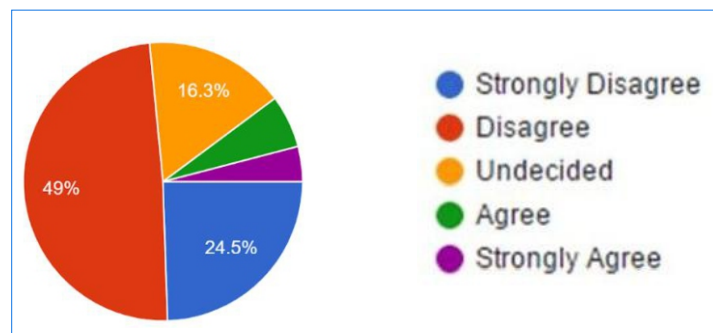
**Table 04: The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Cause of Financial Crisis and Decrease in Revenues for Kurdish Media Outlets**

**11. The Effect of COVID-19 on Cost Reduction:** Table 05 illustrates that a significant portion of survey respondents (39.8%) “Agree” that the global pandemic of COVID-19 contributed to the reduction of operational expenditures within Kurdish television channels in the Kurdistan Region. An additional 15.3% “Strongly Agree” with this assessment, indicating that a majority of participants acknowledge the pandemic's influence on cost-cutting measures. In contrast, 27.6% of respondents remain undecided, reflecting uncertainty regarding the extent or clarity of this impact. A smaller proportion (11.2%) “Disagree” and 6.1% “Strongly disagree,” which rejects the statement. The variability in responses may be attributed to the opaque financial practices and limited transparency in administrative procedures within Kurdish broadcasting institutions. Often, only a few senior figures possess full knowledge of financial matters, while editorial and operational staff are typically excluded from such information. In some instances, staff became aware of financial changes through indirect means, such as internal inquiries or the implementation of predetermined austerity measures, which resulted in salary reductions, enforced leave, or the dismissal of employees.

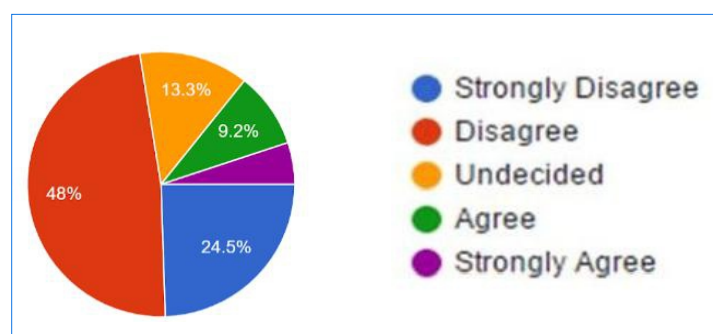
**Table 05: The COVID-19 Pandemic Had an Impact on the Reduction and Limitation of Expenditures of Kurdish Television Channels**

**12. The Effect of COVID-19 on Advertising Reduction:** As illustrated in Table 06, the global pandemic of COVID-19 significantly contributed to the decline in advertising activities across Kurdish television channels. Specifically, 49% of survey participants “Agreed” that the pandemic in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq led to a reduction in advertisements, with an additional 24.5% “Strongly agreeing”, indicating a strong consensus regarding the pandemic's adverse impact on media advertising. Conversely, 16.3% of respondents were “Uncertain”, while only 6.1% “Disagreed” and 4.1% “Strongly disagreed” with the statement. These findings reflect a widespread recognition that restrictive measures, such as lockdowns and limitations on mobility, disrupted market dynamics and consumer behavior, thereby diminishing commercial demand for advertising on Kurdish television.

Nevertheless, some channels managed to offset losses by broadcasting public health awareness campaigns funded by governmental bodies, ministries, or both local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although these campaigns differed in format and volume from traditional commercial advertisements, they provided an alternative revenue stream that supported ongoing media production during the pandemic.

**Table 06: The COVID-19 Pandemic Had an Impact on Limiting and Reducing Advertisements in Kurdish Television Channels**

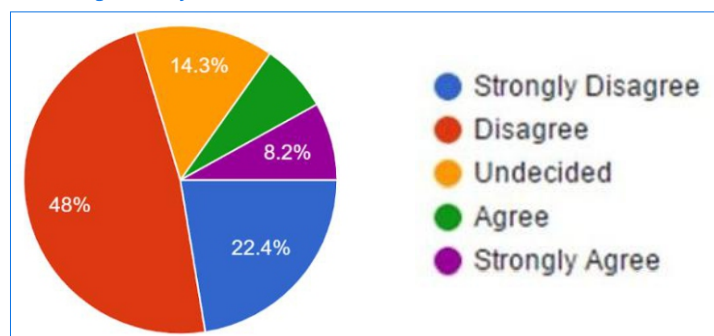
**13. The Effect of COVID-19 on the Broadcast of New Advertisements:** Table 07 demonstrates that the global pandemic of COVID-19 significantly affected the frequency and volume of new advertisements broadcast on Kurdish television channels. In particular, 48% of respondents “Agreed” that the pandemic impacted the broadcasting of new advertisements in the Kurdistan Region, while an additional 24.5% “Strongly agreed”, indicating considerable support for this viewpoint. In contrast, 13.3% expressed “Uncertainty”, 9.2% “Disagreed”, and 5.1% “Strongly disagreed”. These results underscore a broader trend observed during the pandemic: advertisers were generally reluctant to invest in promotional campaigns for products and services that consumers could not readily access due to lockdowns and mobility restrictions. Consequently, commercial advertisements declined, while public health awareness campaigns (primarily intended to maintain brand visibility rather than stimulate immediate consumer demand) increased in prominence. This shift is corroborated by the testimonies of advertising professionals and television managers, many of whom reported that planned advertising campaigns were either delayed or canceled amid the prevailing economic and public health uncertainty.

**Table 07: The COVID-19 Pandemic Had an Impact on the Level of Broadcasting New Advertisements on Kurdish Television Channels**

**14. The Effect of COVID-19 on Advertising Revenue:** Table 08 illustrates that the global pandemic of COVID-19 significantly influenced the limitation and decline of advertising revenue for Kurdish television channels. This is supported by the finding that 48% of respondents “Agreed” with the assertion that the pandemic adversely affected advertising income in the Kurdistan Region, while an additional 22.4% “Strongly”

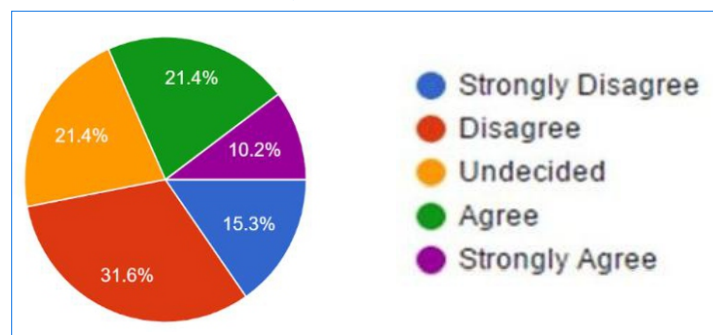
concurrent with this perspective. Conversely, 14.3% of participants remained "Neutral", and 15.3% expressed "Disagreement" (8.2%) "Strongly" and 7.1% moderately with the statement. These results imply that the financial sustainability of Kurdish television stations does not exclusively rely on advertising revenues. Instead, support from political entities, prominent individuals, and select companies contributes to mitigating the impact of reduced advertising income. This understanding is further corroborated by comments from several Kurdish TV channel managers concerning future outlooks.

**Table 08: The COVID-19 Pandemic Had an Impact on the Limitation and Reduction of Advertising Revenue for Kurdish Television Channels**



**15. The Effect of COVID-19 on the Sustainability and Continuity of TV Channels:** Table 09 reveals that a plurality of respondents (31.6%) acknowledged that the ongoing effects of the global pandemic of COVID-19, coupled with movement restrictions in the Kurdistan Region, have adversely affected the sustainability and continuity of Kurdish television channels. This perspective was further endorsed by 15.3% of participants. Meanwhile, 21.4% of respondents were "Uncertain" about the pandemic's impact, with some expressing ambivalence regarding the effect, while others believed it to be significant. Additionally, 10.2% "Strongly agreed" that the persistent pandemic conditions pose a considerable threat to the operational stability of Kurdish TV channels. Variations in these responses likely reflect differences in revenue streams and financial management strategies across channels, many of which depend on support from political parties, corporations, and influential stakeholders. Financial constraints have presented considerable challenges to ongoing operations. Observations from the research highlight that local media outlets such as the newspapers *Hawlati* and *Awene*, alongside television channels like Rudaw and Kurdistan24, have encountered substantial financial hardships due to diminished advertising revenues and reduced external funding. Consequently, these media outlets have implemented significant staff reductions, with numerous employees experiencing interruptions or decreases in regular salary payments. For instance, a journalist previously earning approximately \$500 at *Hawlati* now reportedly earns over \$1,200 through these channels, underscoring the economic pressures currently influencing the media landscape [46], [47], [48].

**Table 09: The Ongoing Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Movement Restrictions on the Sustainability and Continuity of Kurdish Television Channels**



#### 4.3 Advertising Companies and Data Transition

This section analyzes the feedback obtained from four advertising firms that participated in a survey conducted among journalists in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The aim was to evaluate the consequences of COVID-19-related movement restrictions on the efficacy and distribution of advertising during the pandemic period.

##### 4.3.1 Advertising Firms and Market Dynamics during the COVID-19 Crisis

With few exceptions, the majority of advertising firms reported that the global pandemic of COVID-19 adversely affected the effectiveness of advertising campaigns. Unik Engineering, one of the participating companies, emphasized that the pandemic's global spread, in conjunction with its localized effects in the Kurdistan Region, led to considerable disruptions across multiple sectors, including healthcare, food services, and communications. Consequently, both business operations and advertising revenue suffered notable declines. According to Unik Engineering: (see the Research Appendix) [49], [50].

*"Advertising became significantly more difficult due to limitations on the conventional platforms and channels typically used for promotional purposes, all of which were restricted by COVID-19 regulations. This led to widespread disruption of advertising activities."*

A similar perspective was shared by Start Center, another advertising agency, which observed a sharp decline in advertising activity at the onset of the pandemic. This was largely attributed to government-imposed restrictions and social distancing mandates, which led to the suspension of various commercial operations. While sectors such as pharmaceuticals and food services attempted to adjust, many others struggled to maintain their advertising presence. Start Center stated: (see the Research Appendix) [51], [52], [53].

*"Our operations were reduced rather than expanded, as numerous advertising venues became inaccessible due to movement restrictions. Businesses tried to adapt, but the circumstances significantly altered both the placement and reach of advertisements."*

AD Media also reported a decline in advertising volume, estimating a 20% to 30% decrease. In response, the company redirected its focus toward digital platforms, emphasizing video production and social media engagement. Nevertheless, the firm faced operational difficulties due to limitations on staff mobility and equipment availability, which hindered their ability to meet the rising demand for digital content. As AD Media explained: (see the Research Appendix) [54], [55], [56].



*"Although we scaled up our digital services, our overall business performance declined. The demand for video and social media content increased, but our capacity to fulfill this demand was restricted by staffing challenges."*

In contrast, Suli Media (a company specializing in digital advertising) experienced growth in online advertising demand during the pandemic. As businesses sought to maintain consumer engagement, they increasingly turned to digital alternatives, which positioned Suli Media advantageously in the market. Despite the operational difficulties, all firms emphasized the enduring significance of advertising in facilitating economic recovery. While traditional advertising avenues were severely impacted, many companies swiftly transitioned to digital platforms to maintain visibility and reach. In conclusion, the global pandemic of COVID-19 catalyzed a profound transformation in the advertising sector within the Kurdistan Region. Although some firms encountered revenue losses and operational disruptions, others successfully navigated the crisis by embracing digital advertising strategies. The experience underscores the critical importance of agility and innovation in ensuring business continuity during periods of socio-economic uncertainty [57].

#### 4.3.2 The Effect of Advertising Companies and Consumer Demand During the COVID-19 Pandemic

All four advertising firms participating in this study highlighted that a major factor contributing to the decline in advertising activity during the pandemic was the significant reduction in client demand. This downturn was primarily attributed to market disruptions, enforced home isolation, and movement restrictions aimed at controlling the spread of COVID-19. For example, Unik Engineering reported that the suspended of promotional activities and halted the broadcasting of completed advertisements, particularly those scheduled for Nowruz and Ramadan campaigns. They stated that "all advertisements were put on hold and were not aired." Similarly, Suli Media described the unpredictability of the early stages of the pandemic, which led to a marked slowdown in both the production and dissemination of advertisements. They noted that many businesses and their owners shifted their priorities toward ensuring political and economic stability, rather than investing in advertising. Moreover, Suli Media highlighted the role of government agencies in addressing public needs during the health crisis. While private-sector advertising efforts declined, government bodies assumed a more active role in disseminating essential health information, which opened up alternative opportunities for advertising companies. As they put it, "despite the limited number of advertisements, the government's need to deliver messages to the public on managing budgets and health precautions created opportunities for advertising firms." Another contributing factor to the decline in advertising demand was the limited presence of large-scale commercial enterprises in the Kurdistan Region. Executives explained that the regional economy is primarily composed of small and medium-sized businesses, which operate with relatively constrained budgets and profit margins. As a result, many of these businesses significantly reduced their advertising expenditures in response to the financial uncertainty triggered by the pandemic. AD Media also observed that their clients (especially smaller businesses) reduced the number of advertising projects they commissioned. Instead, clients opted for more cost-effective strategies, utilizing a mix of digital platforms and television channels for promotional purposes, in

light of tightened advertising budgets. Overall, the global pandemic of COVID-19 had a substantial effect on commercial advertising operations, particularly for small enterprises that lacked the financial capacity to engage in large-scale marketing efforts. According to several executives, even businesses within essential sectors such as food and beverage significantly scaled back their promotional campaigns during the crisis. Although some ongoing advertising partnerships remained intact, especially for clients engaged in long-term campaigns, the general trend reflected a notable decline in advertising and marketing activity across most sectors during the health emergency [58].

## 5. RESEARCH CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study demonstrate a shared recognition among advertisers, journalists, Kurdish television executives, and advertising agencies regarding the decline in advertising activities and their implications during the global pandemic of COVID-19. This downturn was largely due to a redirection of media priorities toward disseminating public health information and safety protocols, as opposed to commercial advertising. Lockdown measures (including movement restrictions, social distancing, and isolation) had a particularly acute effect on advertising practices, especially in the consumer goods sector. In this sense, three key findings emerged from the analysis:

**1. Transformation of Public Communication Dynamics:** The emphasis on public health messaging during the lockdown altered the interaction between marketing entities and the public in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Advertising companies had to realign their strategies to conform to public health guidelines, resulting in a significant increase in campaigns focused on safety awareness rather than traditional consumer marketing.

**2. Disruption of Major Advertising Projects:** Large-scale advertising efforts (especially video production campaigns by agencies such as Suli Media, AD Media, Unik Engine, and Start Center) were significantly disrupted. The industry shifted towards smaller, lower-revenue projects, often focused on health communication and relying heavily on digital platforms for distribution.

**3. Variation in Financial Resilience among Media Outlets:** The financial impact on television channels varied according to their funding models. Outlets dependent on commercial advertising experienced sharp declines in revenue, while those supported by political or governmental bodies continued broadcasting health and safety content with relatively more stability.

While the pandemic significantly disrupted traditional advertising channels, many companies rapidly adapted by adopting digital approaches to maintain audience engagement. Ultimately, the COVID-19 crisis triggered a substantial transformation in the advertising landscape of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Despite revenue losses and operational challenges for some, others managed to sustain their activities through digital innovation. This highlights the essential role of adaptability and strategic foresight in maintaining business continuity during socio-economic crises. Field observations further revealed that prominent media outlets (such as *Hawlati* and *Awene* newspapers) faced severe financial challenges due to declining advertising income and a reduction in external

funding. This led to notable workforce reductions and interruptions in employee compensation. For instance, one journalist formerly earning around \$500 at *Hawlati* reportedly now receives over \$1,200 from other outlets, reflecting broader economic pressures affecting the media workforce. Additionally, advertising executives noted that even businesses in critical sectors, such as food and beverages, curtailed their marketing efforts during the pandemic. Although some long-term partnerships persisted, the overall trend pointed to a significant contraction in advertising and promotional activities across most sectors during the health crisis. Based on these insights, the study recommends that Kurdish advertising firms and television broadcasters (across both terrestrial and satellite platforms) strengthen their digital infrastructure and diversify online advertising strategies. Given the increasing reliance on digital platforms under pandemic conditions, this shift is essential for future resilience. Additionally, it is proposed that media researchers further explore the global pandemic's effects on advertising production, dissemination methods, revenue structures, and journalistic practices within the Kurdish media sector. The study underscores the importance of interdisciplinary research spanning media studies, economics, public health, and social sciences, as a foundation for formulating collaborative policies involving both public and private stakeholders in the post-conflict Region of Kurdistan.

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## 6.2 Research Appendix (Participants for Interviews)

The study included interviews with several key figures from the media and advertising sector in the Kurdistan Region, conducted in April 202. These participants were:

1. Amer Salah, Chief Executive Officer of Falcon Television (April 18)
2. Awat Ali, President of the Nalia Media Institute (April 18)
3. Dana Mustafa, Executive Director of AD Media Advertising Production Company (Interview conducted on April 11)
4. Diyari Hamid, Executive Director of Soli Media Advertising Production and Distribution Company (April 15)
5. Farooq Ali, Director General of Komal Media Network (April 16)
6. Harez Faraidoon, Owner and Director of Start Center for Advertising (April 09)
7. Rezwan Abdulhamid, Executive Director of Unique Engine Advertising Company (April 10)

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