

Semiotic Analysis on Film Industry: Case Study Suspiria Movie Poster

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Abstract

Movie poster often used as a medium of commercial purposes in advertising a movie as it delivers what the movie is all. This way, film making companies could attract more viewers to see a certain movie. Therefore, the goal of this study is to analyze the message contained in the verbal and non-verbal aspects in Suspiria movie poster using semiotic approach from Barthes. This research used descriptive qualitative and literature review to collect the data. This study discusses how a movie poster from Suspiria can create and deliver its meaning to the viewer through the verbal and non-verbal aspects, which resulted in gaining interest from the potential movie viewers. The results of this study suggest that each symbol and sign (verbal and non-verbal aspects) used in the movie can convey the meaning thoroughly through its meaning association. This study concludes that the signs and symbols used in the poster movie of Suspiria has its own meaning and could represent, portray, and convey the meaning of the movie poster well.

Keywords: Suspiria, semiotic, denotative, connotative, myth

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INTRODUCTION

Language is used by people to communicate, and language could be interpreted as signs that convey messages. Language signs are often utilized in the form of both verbal and nonverbal (visual) language. These language signs can represent or convey meaning. The meaning expressed might come in the form of implicit or explicit meaning. Semiotic is the study of how messages are communicated through signs (Simatupang 124). In general, a message is something delivered that contains information that allows people to communicate with one another. Communications are divided into two types, namely verbal messages and nonverbal messages. Verbal messages are often written however messages can take the form of symbols, signs, images, and other forms (Kusumawati 83-88). When communicating, the message is typically delivered in the form of a sign (Djawad 96-97). Signs are a type of communication used to understand the message or information communicated by the communicator to the communicant (Eco, 15). The message's interpretation consists of a series of meanings.

As previously explained, a message is something (information) that is conveyed either verbally or nonverbally. To comprehend the message, we must first comprehend its implicit and explicit meaning. In general, a media to communicate messages is required. This is because the media can assist people in properly and effectively transferring information. Film posters are a type of media utilized by film production companies. According to Juliantari, the movie poster is still an extremely significant aspect of film promotion (Juliantari, 2014). A movie poster's

goal is to generate interest in a film, and it is an effective technique to distribute a film in a larger variety of areas. A movie poster may also provide us with significant information about the film's context. In other words, film posters may be classified as language signs since they carry messages and meanings that are either explicitly or implicitly conveyed. This is due to the fact that the film poster designer will always include language signs such as verbal and non-verbal language.

In a movie poster, we would not see much of words, clauses, or sentences. It is because every sign, color, symbol, and painting are also several forms to communicate with other people. In communicating with someone, we use sign to send our meaning about object to other people. That way, they can interpret it well. It is because signs are the basic of all communication (Sobur, 2017). Through images and signs, we can communicate with each other in this world. A study about sign is called semiotic. According to Saussure, semiotic is one of methods to learn about signs. In his concept, Saussure uses signifier and signified. Sound and object called signifier, while signified is a concept of the object. The relation between these two called as a signification, which resulted as a sign (Saussure, 2011).

Barthes expanded the theory and used order of signification to explain sign more clearly. According to Barthes, order of signification is classified into denotation, connotation, and another aspect from sign, which is myth. Moreover, it is also stated that denotation is the first level of sign, while connotation and myth is on the second level. According to Barthes in Hall, a descriptive sign without content of ideological is called denotative. Meanwhile, connotative sign is the one that has lost its historical meaning. Terminology, culture, and event changes as well as evolution might be the reason of it (Hall, 2012). Chandler explains further and stated that denotation tends to be describes as literal meaning (dictionary meaning) or obvious meaning of sign, while connotation is an analogue code (Chandler, 1994). In other words, denotation and connotation is what and how the words, clauses, sentences, signs, and symbol photographed. Meanwhile, Barthes also stated that myth is a communication system that used to convey new messages from the connection of connotative meaning.

Several studies regarding movie poster using semiotic approach have been conducted. Ayun and Martadi discussed a study regarding *Parasite* movie poster (English version) (Ayun and Martadi, 2018) using semiotic approach. They used Barthes's theory as the grand theory to analyzed signs that depicted in the movie poster. Another similar study was also conducted by Mega and Tawami, however, they used *Joker* as the case study to interpret the signs used using semiotic approach. In their study, however, they limited the interpretation of signs to denotative and connotative meaning only (Mega and Tawami, 2020). Furthermore, Satria conducted an analysis of *Gundala* movie poster using semiotic approach. In the study Satria used Saussure as the grand theory (Satria, 2020), which mean that the analysis is limited to the signifier and signified of the signs depicted in the movie poster only. Wirhayati and Sudrajat also conducted aresearch on horror movie posters using a semiotic approach. They argued that each symbol plays an important role in conveying the meaning of the horror movie poster (Wirhayati and Sudrajat, 2020). However, there has not been a study that uses *Suspiria* as the case study. Moreover, this study also focuses on both the verbal and non-verbal signs depicted in the case study, which different from the other previous study.

This study aims at analyzing the verbal and non-verbal aspects in *Suspiria* movie poster using semiotic approach and its impact to increase the ticket sales. This research used descriptive qualitative and literature review to collect the data.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative method with a semiotic approach from Roland Barthes. The descriptive method is used to describe the research problem accurately (Sahin, Saugfta, and Cashew 1). According to Sahin et al, descriptive method focuses more on describing demographics than "why" a phenomenon can occur (Sahin, Saugfta, and Mete 2). Therefore, this study describes the language signs on the selected film posters using a semiotic approach and using the theory developed by Roland Barthes. The data used in this study was chosen by several steps.

Several criteria were used before determining the case study, including:

1. The movie must use English as the original language
2. There must be signs depicted in the chosen movie poster
3. There must be at least a word depicted in the movie poster as the verbal language sign

We found several movies that matches with the criteria above. Furthermore, we added one more criteria to filter the data, namely only using movie which was directed by Luca Guadagnino. It is because Luca Guadagnino is known as director who knows how to appeal the 'sense' into the movie he directed (Fadda and Garafalo, 2018). After adding the new criteria, we found several movies directed by him, however, there is only one movie that wins various awards because of several reasons, one of it is because the movie poster used to promote the movie. Furthermore, *suspiria* is chosen as the data for this study. The used data in this study was signs (verbal and non-verbal sign) that depicted in *Suspiria* movie poster.

Suspiria is a movie classified as restricted rating for disturbing content, graphic nudity, bloody images, violence, and ritual. Therefore, this movie is chosen to be the subject data as understanding signs that depicted in a restricted movie is important. It is important because it can prevent underage people to see the movie. Also, analyzing this movie poster is also interesting because not only this movie is distinguished because the 'sense' that depicted in the movie, but also because the official movie poster. Furthermore, the data was collected in several steps, including:


1. Downloading the study case
2. Finding signs depicted in the movie poster
3. Dividing the signs into verbal and non-verbal signs

To determine the official movie poster from *Suspiria* film, an online application to watch movies named Netflix was used. After determining the official movie poster, we used Bing website to obtained the movie poster because in Netflix we cannot download the movie poster. Bing is chosen as the website provides high-quality images. After obtaining the case study (downloading the case study) and the data (dividing the signs into verbal and non-verbal signs), we analyzed the data according to Roland Barthes (1967) theory.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

'Suspiria' is a film that has a restricted rating. This film was released in 2018. The genre of this film is Horror/Thriller. In this movie, we get one official movie poster. Table 1 shows the analysis of Suspiria movie poster.

Table 1. Semiotic Analysis of 'Suspiria' Movie Poster

Semiotic Analysis of 'Suspiria' Movie Poster	
Signifier	Signified
	<p>There are two women who has different age. One of the older women stood with her chin up and her eyes down, lighting a cigarette and wearing a very closed shirt. Meanwhile, the other had shoulder-length hair and a more exposed clothing. An older woman's glance appears to be criticizing something or someone, whereas a younger woman's gaze appears to be paying attention to something or someone. In addition, there are six women wearing clothing that is quite revealing around the younger woman's chest. The six women appeared to be dancing</p>
First Level Language Sign	<p>Denotation</p> <p>Showing eight women in one time while each person has different postures and sizes</p> <p>The use of different font sizes (there are large, medium, and small) indicates the urgency or importance of verbal language signs</p>
	<p>Connotation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The elder woman is the chairman or leader (the lady with the greater social status) of all these women. 2. Younger women are the ones that the boss trusts <p>Myth</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Older, taller, bigger, and smoking is a myth for a boss (shown in the visualization of the older woman) 2. Dressing sexy or revealing (seductive), beautiful or gorgeous, and yet looking youthful is a myth for the person that the boss trusts (appears in the visualization of the younger women)
Second Level Language Sign	

The representation of two female visualizations on the poster for the film 'Suspiria' may be stated to be the major point since the two figures of the two ladies are portrayed larger than the other six women. As a result, we examined the myths created by the two ladies. Furthermore, the major focus of this film poster is on the

verbal language signs portrayed, namely the word 'SUSPIRIA,' which is the title of this movie poster. Signs of verbal language displayed by this poster in addition to the title are the names of the two female characters, a review, the company of the filmmaker, slogan, information about the director and crew of the film, and information about when the film will be released. The slogan depicted on this poster is “Give your soul to the dance”. An analysis of the slogan from the 'Suspiria' poster is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Verbal Language Sign Analysis (slogan)

Verbal Language Sign Analysis (slogan)	
Signifier	Signified
GIVE YOUR SOUL TO THE DANCE	Showing a slogan from the movie poster using a phrase
First Level Language Sign	Denotation
	Using “GIVE YOUR SOUL TO THE DANCE” as a quote for <i>Suspiria</i> film
Second Level Language Sign	Connotation
	Slogan is the identity that a film must have in a film poster to describe the message and sign of the film
	Myth
	Having an identity helps people to know something, in this case is a slogan to make people know this film, is a myth created from this movie poster

Another sign that appears in the poster for the film 'Suspiria' is the actresses name, namely Dakota Johnson and Tilda Swinton. The analysis of these verbal signs is in Table 3.

Table 3. Verbal Language Sign Analysis (Dakota Johnson dan Tilda Swinton)

Verbal Language Sign Analysis (Dakota Johnson dan Tilda Swinton)	
Signifier	Signified
DAKOTA JOHNSON TILDA SWINTON	Showing the names of the two actresses in the film 'Suspiria'
First Level Language Sign	Denotation
	The actresses of this film are Dakota Johnson and Tilda Swinton
Second Level Language Sign	Connotation
	The two actresses are believed to be able to make potential watchers of the film have the expectation that the film will have a good quality. Therefore, the designer chose to include both names on the film poster
	Myth
	Showing up information about the film's cast will help the film's success

The next verbal language sign depicted in the poster is a review. The review was provided by Indiewire and Vulture. The analysis of these language signs is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Verbal Language Sign Analysis (Review)

Verbal Language Sign Analysis (review)	
Signifier	Signified
<p>“A GRIM AND GLORIOUS WORK OF MADNESS” - INDIEWIRE “A GORGEOUS HIDEOUS UNCOMPROMISING FILM” - VULTURE</p>	<p>Showing an information about the film 'Suspiria' from two companies or people</p>
First Level Language Sign	Denotation
	There are two websites that provide reviews about the film
Second Level Language Sign	Connotation
	These two entertainment websites (such as watching movies) are considered capable to attract the interest of potential viewers
	Myth
	If a film receives favorable feedback from an entertainment website, potential viewers are more likely to watch the film

The following verbal language sign is in the form of a phrase, which “A film by Guadagnino.” Table 5 shows the analysis of the verbal language sign.

Table 5. Verbal Language Sign Analysis (“A film by Guadagnino”)

Verbal Language Sign Analysis (“A film by Guadagnino”)	
Signifier	Signified
A FILM BY LUCA GUADAGNINO	Showing information about the director
First Level Language Sign	Denotation
	The film was produced by a company known as Guadagnio
Second Level Language Sign	Connotation
	The films produced and distributed by Guadagnio have high quality. This is proven from the sign size, and it demonstrates that the company is well-known for producing high-quality films because the designer of this film poster believe that this information is important
	Myth

	Using a well-known film company with high quality standards can help to increase the number of people who are interested in seeing the film
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There is another verbal language sign that gives information about the cast of the film 'Suspiria' underneath the film's slogan. Table 6 depicts the analysis of the verbal language sign.

Table 6. Verbal Language Sign Analysis (Suspiria film's staff and director information)

Verbal Language Sign Analysis (Suspiria film's staff and director information)	
Signifier	Signified
<p>Amazon Studios And K Period Media Present A Frensy Film Company / Videa / Mythology Entertainment / First Sun / Memo Film Production</p> <p>A Film By Luca Guadagnio "Suspiria"</p> <p>Dakota Johnson Tilda Swinton Mia Goth Ebersdorf Angela Winkler Ingrid Caven Elena Fokina Sylvie Testud Renée Soutendijk Christine Leboutte Fabrizia Sacchi Malgosia Bella With Jessica Harper And Chloë Grace Morteza Casting Stella Savino Avy Kaufman Graphic And Titles Designer Dan Perri Music Supervisor Robin Urdang Choreographer Damien Jalet Costume Designer Giulia Piersanti Production Designer Inbal Weinberg Music By Thom Yorke Cinematographer Sayombhu Mukdeeprom Editor Walter Fasano Executive Producers Kimberly Steward Lauren Beck Josh Godfrey Stella Savino James Vanderbilt Massimiliano Violante Carlo Antonelli Produced By Marco Marabito Bradley J Fischer Luca Guadagnino David Kajganich Silvia Venturini Melzi D'eril William Sherak Gabriele Moratti Based On The Original Screenplay Dario Argento And Daria Nicolodi</p> <p>Screenplay By David Kajganich Directed By Luca Guadagnio</p>	<p>Showing information about people (staff) that participate in the filmmaking process</p>
First Level	Denotation
	Informing others about the film's director and staff

Language Sign	
Second Level Language Sign	Connotation
	Disclosing information about the director and staff in this film is a sign of appreciation and recognition
	Myth
	It is important to acknowledge or appreciate someone that has done something

Furthermore, another verbal language sign in the film poster is 'IN THEATERS THIS FALL.'. Table 7 shows the analysis of verbal language sign.

Table 7. Verbal Language Sign Analysis (*In Theaters This Fall*)

Verbal Language Sign Analysis (<i>In Theaters This Fall</i>)		
	Signifier	Signified
	In theaters THIS FALL	Adding some information on the movie schedule
First Level Language Sign	Denotation	
	Providing information regarding the release of the film 'Suspiria', which is in the fall of 2018	
Second Level Language Sign	Connotation	
	Even if the poster designer did not specify when the picture will be released, information regarding the film's schedule is still as regarded relevant. This could be seen in the designer's choice of size, which is neither too little nor too large	
	Myth	
	The lack of information on the specific broadcast schedule will raise the enthusiasm of the desired audience since the potential audience	

Another verbal language sign depicted in the Suspiria movie poster is 'POSTER BY JOAO PEDRO ALVES'. The analysis of this verbal language sign is shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Verbal Language Sign Analysis (*Poster by Joao Pedro Alves*)

Verbal Language Sign Analysis (<i>Poster by Joao Pedro Alves</i>)		
	Signifier	Signified
	POSTER BY JAÃO PEDRO ALVES	Showing information about the film poster maker
First Level Language Sign	Denotation	
	The poster for the film 'Suspiria' was created and designed by an artist named Joao Pedro Alves	

Second Level Language Sign	Connotation
	A film poster designed by Joao Pedro Alves has excellent quality. Furthermore, as a symbol of recognition, information about the poster maker of this movie poster is raised
	Myth
	Recognizing and appreciating an artist's work that they have created is required

Another verbal language sign that appears on this poster is 'Suspiria'. This verbal language sign has the largest size among other verbal language signs. The analysis of the verbal language sign 'Suspiria' is shown Table 9.

Table 9. Verbal Language Sign Analysis ('*Suspiria*')

	Verbal Language Sign Analysis (<i>Suspiria</i>)	
	Signifier	Signified
	SUSPIRIA	Showing a word 'Suspiria'. The size of the work is the largest among all verbal language signs
First Level Language Sign	Denotation	
	1. In comparison to the verbal language sign in the movie poster, 'Suspiria' has the biggest size 2. 'Suspiria' is an Indonesian term that means ' <i>curiga</i> .'	
Second Level Language Sign	Connotation	
	1. According to the film poster, the title of the film is 'Suspiria.' 2. Having the highest size in comparison to other verbal language sign indicates that it is being highlighted (important)	
	Myth	
	The word with the largest size in a poster is the word that is most important (since it is used to show the movie title)	

The first non-verbal language sign is the 'amazon studios' logo, which is placed in the right side. Table 10 shows the analysis of non-verbal language sign.


Table 10. Non-Verbal Language Sign (*Amazon Studios*)

	Non-Verbal Language Sign (<i>Amazon Studios</i>)	
	Signifier	Signified
		Showing a logo from a company named amazon studio
First Level Language Sign	Denotation	
	The movie is produced by Amazon Studio	
Second Level Language Sign	Connotation	
	Amazon Studio is one of America's largest television and film producers and distributors. Movies produced by Amazon Studio are expected to be of high production quality	
	Myth	

	Having a positive corporate image will build trust and confidence in consumers, in this case movie audiences, in the film's quality
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The last language sign on this movie poster is the non-verbal language sign in the bottom left corner. The nonverbal language sign is 'K.Media.' Table 11 shows an analysis of nonverbal language sign.

Table 11. Non-Verbal Language Sign (*Amazon Studios*)

Non-Verbal Language Sign (<i>Amazon Studios</i>)	
	Signified
	Showing a logo from a company named K. Media
First Level Language Sign	Denotation
	The company K. Media created or edited the film 'Suspiria.'
Second Level Language Sign	Connotation
	K. Media is a firm that specializes in design and editing. A film developed and edited by K. Media will have excellent video (film) quality. A video film's quality may be greatly improved by proper design and editing
	Myth
	An excellent video film's design and editing might attract potential audiences

CONCLUSION

The message of the *Suspiria* film poster is conveyed through the use of signs, which are categorized into verbal and non - verbal language signs. The language signs are used to convey the meaning or message that the film making company want to deliver. From the signs, we can determine the signifier and signified, which later produce the denotative meaning to see the literal meaning of signs which are represented in the *Suspiria* movie poster. Furthermore, to understand the implied meaning, we also analyzed the connotative meaning from the signs in the *Suspiria* movie poster. The interaction of connotative meanings on the poster thus creates a new type of message, called myth. It is then interpreted as a convention of meaning for readers/movie fans. lastly, Barthes' semiotic approach can encode the messages and meaning that the movie making companies want to convey through signs depicted in the *Suspiria* film poster.

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