

**VISUALIZATION OF CHARACTERS AND MEANINGS OF SIGNS IN SLEEP  
CALL MOVIE POSTERS: Semiotic and Dramaturgical Approaches**

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**ABSTRACT**

Film posters often act as the first media to introduce the themes and nuances of the film to the audience, so the visuals in them are very important in forming the audience's initial expectations. This research examines how the Sleep Call film poster conveys implicit messages through the visual elements used in its design. In this research, Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory is used to identify signs and signifiers that appear on posters, while Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory is used to understand how the audience might interpret and respond to the visuals displayed. Through qualitative descriptive methods, researchers will assess the extent to which the Sleep Call poster successfully reflects the film's main themes and messages, as well as how these visual elements influence the audience's views and expectations of the film's content. Research findings show that the poster design successfully aligns visual elements with the desired tone and theme, thereby increasing the audience's emotional involvement. Thus, this poster can be considered as an effective promotional medium in attracting the audience's attention as well as forming relevant perceptions of the content of the film Sleep Call.

Keywords: Semiotics, Dramaturgy, Sleep Call Film Poster.

**ABSTRAK**

Poster film seringkali menjadi media pertama yang memperkenalkan tema dan nuansa film kepada audiens, sehingga elemen visual di dalamnya sangat penting untuk membentuk ekspektasi awal audiens. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana poster film Sleep Call menyampaikan pesan implisit melalui elemen visual yang digunakan dalam desainnya. Dalam penelitian ini, teori semiotika Ferdinand de Saussure digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi tanda dan penanda yang muncul pada poster, sementara teori dramaturgi Erving Goffman digunakan untuk memahami bagaimana audiens mungkin menginterpretasikan dan merespons visual yang ditampilkan. Melalui metode deskriptif kualitatif, peneliti akan menilai sejauh mana poster Sleep Call berhasil mencerminkan tema dan pesan utama film, serta bagaimana elemen visual tersebut memengaruhi pandangan dan harapan audiens terhadap isi film. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa desain poster berhasil menyelaraskan elemen visual dengan tone dan tema yang diinginkan, sehingga meningkatkan keterlibatan emosional penonton. Dengan demikian, poster ini dapat dinilai sebagai media promosi yang efektif dalam menarik perhatian audiens sekaligus membentuk persepsi yang relevan terhadap konten film Sleep Call.

Kata kunci: Semiotika, Dramaturgi, Poster Film Sleep Call.

## INTRODUCTION

In this digital era, there are many alternatives for marketing media, whether they are 3D (three-dimensional) or 2D (two-dimensional). The methods used vary, from printed materials to those simply posted on digital platforms or shown in short video clips commonly referred to as advertisements. Posters are one of the media used as a platform to promote a product. Companies in the entertainment sector, such as the film industry, are among those that use poster media to attract consumers' interest in watching their films. Like other film companies, IDN PICTURES also uses posters as promotional media for the various films they release.

To introduce their films to the public, the IDN PICTURES team creates attractive promotional posters with visual designs that make their films marketable. This is undoubtedly a form of one-way communication, as there is no direct feedback from the audience regarding the message that the communicator (poster creator) is trying to convey.

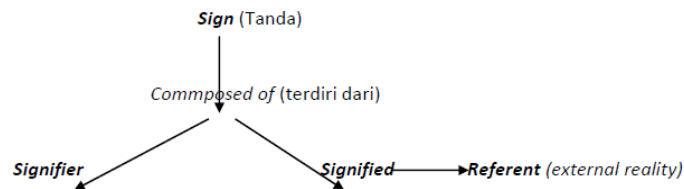
The film "Sleep Call", released by IDN PICTURES on September 7, 2023, tells the story of a woman who survives in a harsh city, her suffering compounded by her mother's condition, who must be cared for in a psychiatric hospital. The film opens with a rather horrific scene depicting a middle-aged man being killed by a younger man with a knife. The next scene tells about the character Dina, who is forced to join an online loan company (PINJOL) as a condition for paying off her debts. Based on this brief discussion about the film, we can conclude that it addresses issues related to early-stage mental health.

Using the semiotic theory approach of Ferdinand de Saussure, this research will identify the signs and signifiers that appear in the poster. Additionally, Erving Goffman's dramaturgical theory will be applied to understand how the audience might interpret those visual elements and relate them to their expectations or emotional responses to the film. Through this analysis, it is hoped that we can understand how the Sleep Call poster functions as an effective promotional medium in attracting viewers' interest in the film's content.

## METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method in which the researcher will describe the results of the analysis and the processes undertaken during the preparation of the article (Ashari & Rochmawati, 2022). In data collection, the researcher uses visual studies to gather primary data from the poster of the film Sleep Call, obtained from the official Instagram account of the film. For secondary data, the researcher employs two data collection techniques: literature review through journals, articles, and websites to gather additional information related to the research topic. Additionally, the researcher conducts a survey of 13 participants to gain perspectives regarding the visual representations depicted in the poster.

After conducting the literature review, the researcher then begins to observe the visuals from the primary data obtained and separates each sign using Saussure's semiotic theory, which studies the signs present in the visual of an object. This theory consists of two parts: the signifier, which is materialistic in nature, and the signified, which is a concept or meaning (Arief Putra Nugroho Widhiami, 2022).



The simple diagram above represents the theoretical concept from Saussure, where he states that a sign is referred to as a representamen or something that replaces something else, termed as the interpretant, which refers to a specific object. These three elements encompass the principles of symbolic meaning, namely signifier and signified (Patriansah & Mubarat, 2021). The two elements, signifier and signified, are interrelated and cannot be separated from each other.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Posters function as a means of visual communication designed to convey messages directly and attractively. In the world of marketing, posters have an important role in attracting the attention of audiences and conveying information about products or events, including films. The combination of visual elements and text on the poster creates a meaning that is easy to understand and able to attract interest (Ashari & Rochmawati, 2022). Apart from that, posters also play a role in building brand awareness and creating a strong visual identity, which can influence the audience's view of the film (Patriansah & Mubarat, 2021).




Ferdinand de Saussure, a linguistics expert, argued that signs consist of two main elements: signifier and signified. The signifier is the physical component of the sign, while the signified is the meaning contained therein. In the analysis of the Sleep Call poster, we can see how various visual and text elements interact to form a deep meaning, thereby generating curiosity among the audience (Munawarah & Tomi, 2023). Erving Goffman in his dramaturgical theory describes social life as a performance, where individuals act as actors in various contexts. In the case of posters, elements such as color and layout function as a 'show' that attracts the audience's attention while clearly conveying the theme of the film (Corrigan & Beaubien, 2013). For example, choosing dark colors in the Sleep Call poster can create a tense atmosphere, in line with the horror film genre being promoted.

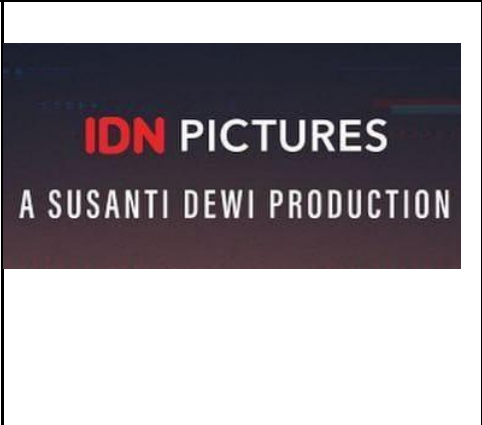
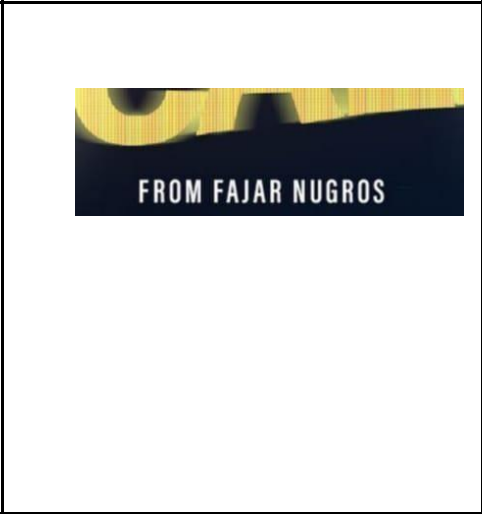


By integrating semiotic and dramaturgical theories, analysis of the Sleep Call film poster provides insight into how visual and verbal elements function together to attract the audience's attention and convey the desired meaning. This approach is very relevant for understanding communication dynamics in the context of film marketing.




Posters are a communication medium which is a work of graphic art consisting of a combination of picture and writing compositions on large or small sized paper (Munawarah & Tomi, 2023). Currently, posters are widely used, especially in the world of film, it is not uncommon for a film producer to publish more than one poster which can describe the character of each character or even show a scene that is most identical to the film with the aim of introducing the film as well as attracting the interest of the audience. potential audience.

As explained in the previous section, this article will analyze the signs contained in the Sleep Call film poster as well as its objectives. The film poster was released on August 7, 2023 at Bilangan Senayan, Jakarta (During, 2023). The idea for making this film came from the director, Fajar Nugros, who was inspired by activities commonly carried out by people in general, namely communicating via cellphone and from that small idea he finally developed it into a story that also addresses mental health issues which are of concern. young people today, especially the Millennial generation and Gen Z. This film is also dedicated to calling for the importance of maintaining mental health for all groups.



No.	Sign : Visual / Verbal	Signifier	Signified
		<p>There are 2 pictures of cellphones facing each other. Both are lit and show a man and a woman (the main characters) facing each other very closely.</p> <p>And the color is dominated by dark chocolate, and additional white for light.</p>	<p>This visual shows that the interaction between the two figures occurs via cellphone or social media.</p>
		<p>The title of the film is written, namely "SLEEP CALL" in capital letters and large font size. The type of font used is shaped like a hologram that looks pseudo and blurred in yellow..</p>	<p>With a predominance of yellow and shadows, blood spots and fine red lines are added. This font seems to lead the reader's opinion if there is a message of caution and bloodshed.</p>
		<p>There are the names of the two main characters in the film at the top.</p>	<p>This section tries to highlight the two actors who play important roles in this film.</p>

		<p>At the top there is the logo of the film producer himself and the name of the owner.</p>	<p>This section clarifies information about the producer and releasing company of the film in other words a brand template.</p>
		<p>Under the film title, there is the director's name written in a font that matches the writing of the film producer.</p>	<p>This article provides information about the name of the director behind the film. Reinforced with the same type of font as the producer's name.</p>
		<p>There is also an information section regarding places and dates. Written in a font color that matches the font color in the title but not with red spots or lines.</p>	<p>Provide information about where and when this film will be shown..</p>
		<p>At the bottom are listed the names of the crew and cast involved in making the film.</p>	<p>This section also tries to show that the team in front of and behind the scenes is a professional team. This is also a marketing strategy to</p>

			attract audience interest.
.		The most part there is also a logo template from the film releasing company.	This section also displays sponsorship of the company that supports it.
.		Then under the left corner there is a signature or special stamp.	This is a sign that shows that the poster has a valid copyright.
0.		The facial expressions of the two main characters who are facing each other are very close and almost kissing.	Seen from the camera angle, it shows an intimacy that suggests something sensual but full of mystery. This is made clear by the bloodstains on the woman's head and the dominance of the brown and black background. Both of their expressions showed emptiness.



With 70% visual dominance and 30% verbal, it is proof that this poster focuses on the representation of the two main characters who seem to be communicating via cellphone which is directly related to the title of the film, namely "Sleep Call".

In dramaturgical theory, the front stage is very clearly depicted by the visualization of the two figures in the poster as if they are showing a sensual closeness through digital media, namely the telephone. However, in reality, when we communicate or interact with digital media, we cannot have such intimate interactions because, after all, interacting with digital media is done when the person doing the interaction is not in the same place or far away. However, this poster seems to give the impression that they are interacting very closely, intimately and even sensually via cell phone as lovers. In accordance with the title of the film, "Sleep Call".

Then there is a verbal that clearly shows the title of the film with neon colors and a large size so that someone can immediately know that it is the title of the film. With a font that is like a hologram, it gives the impression of something fake but looks scary with a red tinge.

However, from the findings in the front stage presentation which shows two characters almost kissing, there is the possibility of a hidden layer that is not clearly visible. This can be seen from the visual of the flow of blood on the female character's head where, with the visualization of the couple, it should reflect joy, happiness, warmth and calm in their closeness. However, this poster actually shows blood flowing out of the female character's head. As if to show that there was injury and bloodshed that occurred between them or even with the other characters.

The two explanations above are further strengthened by the use of color in the dark background and the verbals which are dominated by neon colors as if to add to the impression of mystery, tension, and there is the possibility of containing thriller or psychological elements in it. Dark colors, such as black, dark brown, and gray, are often associated with negative, mysterious, or even dangerous things. Because this color is often associated with death, violence, or the unknown. This is also supported by dark colors which refer to night conditions or shadows, where humans have limited visibility, thereby increasing feelings of alertness and anxiety.

When a dark color full of tension is communicated with a striking neon yellow, the result creates a collaboration of contrasts that triggers attention while creating a feeling of discomfort. Dark represents a hidden threat, while neon yellow draws our attention to dangers that are near or may not be immediately visible. It's as if the poster maker wanted to present a bit of footage from a film full of mystery and psychological tension. It was as if they had been "warned" that this story would be full of surprises, and the dark atmosphere and other visual symbols such as blood gave clues that this film would contain elements of danger and fear.

To strengthen the results of the analysis, researchers have summarized the results of the answers to three questions given to 13 participants regarding their first impressions of the Sleep Call film poster. The question asked was "What was your first impression



after seeing the poster for the film Sleep Call?" From this question, the researcher gave three answer options, namely

1. Spooky, 2. Romantic, 3. Mysterious. The results of the overall answer of respondents were 53.8% of respondents answered that this film looks scary when seen from the color of the poster which tends to use dark tones and visuals of blood. While for the romantic choice it was 23.1% because the visuals of the two characters in the poster were posing. As if they were about to kiss and their expressions showed a sensual impression that was full of meaning. And the last option, namely mysterious, got a percentage of 23.1%, where this can be seen from the visual of the character who seems to be coming out of the cellphone and the gaze of the male character which is so deep but empty, coupled with the visual of blood which is only present in the visual of the female character.

From some of the verbal content in the poster, it is quite supportive of conveying the message in detail by writing the title in the largest and most striking font, information about the release date of the film Sleep Call, who the main and supporting actors are, and the team that played an important role in making it. the film.

The explanation above can be seen that with signs in visual and verbal form, interaction or communication can occur. It is evident that this poster tries to give an unpredictable impression and gives rise to various perceptions from different people so that it seems like a puzzle that when we want to know the answer, we have to watch the film in full.

This finding is proof that the signifier and the signified are two things that are mutually sustainable to create a meaning or message that a communicator wants to convey to his audience. In the context of the Sleep Call poster, signs consisting of colors, images and text work together with signs (the meaning to be conveyed about a film storyline) to create a comprehensive experience for the audience. This shows that visual elements in promotional media are not just mere decoration, but also as a tool to build a narrative and influence the audience's perception of the film's storyline.

These findings offer a new modification to the film promotion approach, where not only the visual aspects are considered, but also the social context underlying the film's story. This adds a new dimension to film marketing studies which previously focused more on purely commercial aspects. And provide innovation to try to create a visual poster that seems to invite the audience to guess how the film's storyline will go so that it succeeds in attracting the audience's interest in watching the film.

Film marketing must truly consider visual elements as an integral part of the communication strategy. Practically, this can be applied in planning future film posters, by paying attention to visual elements that are not only aesthetically attractive, but are also able to convey relevant messages and arouse the audience's emotions. All of these things are done to ensure that the poster functions well.

## CONCLUSIONS

After successfully analyzing the poster for the film *Sleep Call*, the author concludes that all elements, both visual and verbal, are interrelated and effectively support the film's promotional message. The visuals creatively depict the story's content through a puzzle concept designed to pique the audience's curiosity, ultimately encouraging them to watch the film to discover its

narrative flow. The careful arrangement of elements, including the representation of the setting and broadcast date, contributes to a cohesive design that encapsulates the unpredictable plots within the story.

Furthermore, while the poster offers an overview of the film's content, it does so implicitly rather than explicitly, stimulating the curiosity of potential viewers. This research is limited to exploring the elements of signifier and signified, utilizing dramaturgical theory for a deeper analysis. Future research may consider incorporating visual poster theory and other relevant frameworks to enrich the analysis of visual communication in promotional materials.

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