

# A Semiotic Analysis Found on Movie Poster “Shutter Island”

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**Abstract.** This research aims to know the meaning from the semiotic signs on the movie poster. The data is collected from movie poster “the shutter island” which is taken from internet site. This study used qualitative approach since the researcher focused on identifying the sign found in the movie poster of The Shutter Island. This study applied some theories of semiotics, there are theory of sign by Saussure (1974) and some other theories such as Theory of Colour Term by Wierzbicka (1996) which is used for identifying the meaning of colors found in the movie poster and Verbal and Visual Aspect Theory by Dyer (1986) which applied for identifying verbal sign and visual poster in this research. It can be concluded that there are two aspects which is formulated in movie poster Shutter Island, they are verbal and visual aspect. The verbal aspect includes some categories such as the masthead which explained who is the main character in this movie, the title of the film to inform the audience about the film, where the line on the poster inform the audience the spoiled that it was the island where once people got into that island, it could be so difficult for the to get away from the island, and it shows the date the film will be released.

**Keywords:** *The Shutter Island, Semiotic, Movie Poster, Sign.*

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## 1 Introduction

Semiotics is a study of sign. It is linguistics field which discuss about how meaning is created and communicated. According to Hoed (2013) as his understanding, semiotics is a science that examines the signs in people's lives. Sign can be motion, image, pattern that convey meaning. According to Pierce, he defined sign as something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. Advertising is one of media use to inform something important to people, commonly it is used for informing people to do or buy something. Move poster is one of advertising division that has been important element of film's marketing technique. The aim of movie poster is to advertise or promote an upcoming film.

Semiotics is a study of sign. According to Eco (1979) defined a sign is everything that on the grounds of a previously established social convention. While Saussure defines semiology as a

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science that examines the life of signs in social life. Saussure mentioned it in his book (Chandler, 2007) , statement can be seen as followed :

“It is . . . possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it. semiology (from the Greek *se-meion*, ‘sign’). It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. Since it does not yet exist, one cannot say for certain that it will exist. But it has a right to exist, a place ready for it in advance. Linguistics is only one branch of this general science.”

Saussure defined semiology as a general science of signs of which linguistics would form only one part, while the Roland Barthes mentioned semiology is branch from linguistic (Riley, 2001). So, sign is something that stands for something else. Semiotics can help people get a lot of information and help them communicate more efficiently by understanding the signs around them. To get the meaning of a sign, there are several processes that must be followed. We can carry out the process of representing a sign by interpreting it through the things that represent it, either in the form of color or form. That's what is called semiosis.

Visual semiotics is sub-domain of semiotics. Visual semiotics is one field that studies how visual images convey or communicate the message. If semiotics only talks about the sign and symbol, then visual semiotics talks about the symbol and sign we see. In this field, the photo or picture will be indexed due to the presence of sign.

In this research, the data is movie poster which consists of picture and text on it, so the signs take from the picture and the text through analyzing verbal sign, non verbal sign, and the color sign through the movie poster.

Commonly, the work of art shows image rather than text, but sometimes they can have both of it. Connecting the meaning from the text and picture can give a big effect on the reader's understanding. So the meaning of word and the meaning of text that we get can influence each other.

Since the sign takes from the picture and text on the poster, this researcher is used visual semiotic analysis. As the previous explanation, visual semiotics emphasizes the way visual image convey or communicate the message.

There are several differences found between general semiotic and visual semiotic. In visual semiotic, a photo or image is considered an index because it has a sign, while in general semiotic, a photo or image is an icon because the sign is similar to an object. To explain briefly, the steps in analyzing signs through visual semiotics analysis are starting with analyzing the signs we get, followed by clarifying the object of the sign based on the existing signs, the last

step is to see how the interpreter interprets the sign, whether through facts or someone's personal reasoning or each individual.

Movie poster aims to make the audience know what the new film is about to be released. Movie poster is such an important element since it can be effective way to dole out the movie. This research analyzed the semiotic sign used in movie poster advertisement using semiotic theories. Nowadays semiotics is used for many fields, include to analyze visual element of advertisement from movie poster. The purpose of this research is to analyze the semiotic sign and messages interpreted by verbal and visual sign in movie poster "The Shutter Island" where the researcher tries to get the meaning of semiotic sign, color meaning, and the verbal and visual aspect from the movie poster. This research is expected to be useful for the reader to make them get better understanding of the elements so the movie can catch the attention of moviegoers to watch the movie. The Shutter Island is an amazing film which told the story of a traumatized police officer who is awakened through an experiment. In this film we will see how difficult it is to understand the feelings of someone who has experienced trauma, especially if it is related to family problems. The main character in this film is Leonardo DiCaprio, where this is one of the main factors why this film has received a lot of attention.

This research is analyzed by applying verbal and visual concept by Dyer and supported by theory of Colour term by Wierzbicka. according to Dyer Pichers are easier to understand and have more impact then word. Visual sign means a sign that is delivered with that word true gesture, facial expression in the form of picture or image, and appearance. Dyer (1993:97) divided the elements of non verbal communication in visual sign as follow appearance, age, gender, national and racial, hair, size, body , look, manner, expression, eye contact, pose, clothes, activity, touch, body movement, positional communication. Dyer (1993) stated that word not only describes things, communicate feelings, associations and attitudes, but they also bring to our mind. According to Canada's (2014), a poster is an important marketing tool in most campaigns to sell products to the public.

## **2 Research Method**

The data in this research was taken from poster advertisement entitled "Shutter Island". It was published by Movie Poster Website [https://www.joblo.com/movie\\_posters/2010/shutter-island](https://www.joblo.com/movie_posters/2010/shutter-island) which was published in February 2010. The method that used in this research is qualitative method. Data collection was carried out in several stages, starting from downloading movie posters from sites on the internet. After that the writer analyzes the visual imagery of the film poster such as shape, color, and so on. The final step is to observe the text on the film poster. The research deals with the meaning of movie poster. So, it is suitable to use qualitative method since the movie poster consists of picture (visual) and text (verbal). The verbal and visual sign in the movie poster were analyzed by using the Dyer's concepts (1986), and the semiotic theory

proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1974) which is used to analyze the signified and signifier of sign in the movie poster, while theory of color proposed by Anna Wierzbicka (1996) was used to analyze the color sign in the movie poster. Data collection was carried out in several stages, starting from downloading movie posters from sites on the internet. After that the writer analyzes the visual imagery of the film poster such as shape, color, and so on. The final step is to observe the text on the film poster.

### 3 Result and Discussion

Data analysis is the process of processing raw data to produce information. The results of the data analysis are to answer the problem of the study in this research. The raw data in this study is the Movie Poster *Shutter Island*. The analysis focused on the verbal and visual sign which is analyzed by using theory proposed by Dyer (1986), and Saussure (1974), and theory of color proposed by Wierzbicka (1996).



**Figure I.** The cover of the movie : Shutter Island

#### 3.1. Verbal Aspect Analysis

- **“LEONARDO D’CAPRIO”**: Verbal sign

Message: The masthead of the poster, it informs the reader about who the main character in this film. This film is played by Leonardo D'Caprio as the main character. He is also known to have starred in many famous films of various genres such as drama, horror, thriller, and etc. The reason behind putting the name of the main character on the movie poster is to attract the attention of viewers to watch this film since almost all the films starring Leonardo D'Caprio are always good and get a lot of public attention.

- **“SHUTTER ISLAND”**: Verbal sign

Message: The title of the movie poster. The text is made in capital letter, bold, given white color, and is clearly printed on the movie poster as a sign that this is the main title and is the

main focus of the movie poster design. The film's title is made to stand out to catch the audience's attention and let them know what the film really looks like and what the title of the film is.

- ***“SOME PLACES NEVER LET YOU GO”***: Verbal sign

Message: It looks like a spoiler from the film. This tells us that the island is a place where if we had got into it, it would be difficult to get out of the island again. The idea of putting this line was made with the aim of increasing the audience's curiosity about what kind of island actually exists in the film.

- ***“FEBRUARY 19”***: Verbal sign

Message: It informs the people the release date of the film and when it can be watched by the audience.

### **3.1.2. Visual Aspect Analysis**

After analyzing the verbal sign, the next aspect to be analyzed is visual aspect which includes the color, shape, position, and the background of the movie poster.

- ***Color***

There are several colours that used in this movie poster, such as black, orange, white, blue, red, and grey. The messages conveyed by the colours in the movie poster according to Wierzbica (1996) are:

Black signified the darkness, death, mysterious, and etc. black is used on this poster to bring out the mysterious side of the film. Orange symbolizes warmth, light as we can see from the color of the lighter in the movie poster, it shows the warmth of the fire. White is often described as the color of transparency, the color which represents purification, cleanness, virginity, purity, and etc. The blue color has an identical meaning to the respective ranges. This color can be interpreted according to the culture in which it is found. Generally, blue is symbolized as the color of the sky, this color is also commonly a symbol of calm, wisdom, and intelligence. Red is often symbolized as the color of blood and is also symbolized as the color of courage, danger and lust. Gray refers to the color of detachment, indecision and compromise, this color can also be interpreted as the color of sadness, cloudy, and etc.

- ***Shape***

The shape of this movie poster is a man who is staring intently in a direction holding a burning match. You can also see on the poster an island by the sea. The man holding the match and the picture of the ocean shows the mysteriousness of the film. This can be used as a thing to attract

the attention of the audience where it can increase their curiosity about the film, about what, who, why, and how the film ends. It also can be the target marketing to sell the movie.

- **Background**

The background informs the audience about where the location of the movie set, that's why there is a picture of an island by the sea. Furthermore, Leonardo DiCaprio who holds a lighter in the dark which is symbolized by a black background, to show the mysteriousness of the film which suits the genre of the film, it's the mystery genre.

#### **4 Conclusion**

After analyzing the movie poster Shutter Island, the writer concludes some points such as: there are two aspects which is formulated in movie poster Shutter Island, they are verbal and visual aspect. The verbal aspect includes some categories such as the masthead which explained who is the main character in this movie, the title of the film to inform the audience about the film, where the line on the poster inform the audience the spoiled that it was the island where once people got into that island, it could be so difficult for the to get away from the island, and it shows the date the film will be released. Meanwhile, from the visual aspect, we can understand that this film genre is mysterious. The visual aspect of this movie poster includes the color, shape and background of the poster. The movie poster implied the message especially verbal and visual aspect. The movie poster used the semiotical signs by both verbal and visual aspects, where it is important to give the people information about the message of sign found in the poster.

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