

## REPRESENTATION OF THE MEANING OF TIME AND WOMEN IN THE FILM POSTER SORE: ISTRI DARI MASA DEPAN: A STUDY OF VISUAL SEMIOTICS AS A DEVELOPMENT OF VISUAL LITERACY TEACHING MATERIALS

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### ABSTRACT

The film poster for SORE: Istri dari Masa Depan by Yandy Laurens serves as a starting point for research to understand how time and women are represented in contemporary Indonesian visual culture, while also exploring its potential as a visual literacy teaching material. This study uses an interpretive qualitative semiotic approach with Roland Barthes' three-level framework of meaning—denotation, connotation, and myth—and is strengthened by in-depth interviews with five informants to obtain audience perceptions. The analysis focuses on five visual elements: color grading, lighting, layering, bird's-eye view framing, and typography. The research findings indicate that the composition of the spiral staircase depicts time as a non-linear cycle, while the doubling of female figures forms a fragmented and dreamy feminine identity. Furthermore, this study finds that the semiotic analysis of the film poster has real benefits as an authentic teaching material in the Visual Communication Design Study Program. Thus, this research confirms that film poster design is not just a visual communication medium, but also a critical learning resource worthy of being integrated into the visual communication education curriculum to develop students' visual literacy competencies.

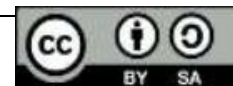
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## INTRODUCTION

A movie poster is a visual communication tool intended to summarize and convey the elements of a film to an audience within a limited time and space. Movie posters are particularly useful in design education because they are not only promotional tools but also valuable research resources for enhancing students' visual skills. In the era of modern visual culture, students must master the ability to critically read visual signs, particularly in the Visual Communication Design (DKV) Study Program. Because material related to everyday life is more likely to spark meaningful discussion, the integration of popular culture texts as authentic teaching materials has been shown to increase student engagement and critical thinking.

Movie posters have their own advantages as teaching materials. Wiraseptya & Stefvany (2024) This study demonstrates that visual communication-based teaching materials can significantly improve the quality of learning if the Visual Communication Design Study Program collaborates with educational institutions. Furthermore, semiotic analysis of film posters has been shown to be an effective learning method for uncovering ideological messages and values contained in visual designs. (Firmansyah et al., 2024). This makes film posters a relevant pedagogical tool for the DKV curriculum, especially for visual semiotics and cultural studies courses.

The film *SORE: Istri dari Masa Depan* (2025) directed by Yandy Laurens, starring Sheila Dara and Dion Wiyoko, tells the story of the complexity of a romantic relationship that transcends time. With a design full of symbols and visual layers, the official poster consciously places the temporal aspect at the heart of communication. This poster is an important object of semiotic research and may also serve as teaching material due to its spiral structure from a bird's-eye perspective, the doubling of female figures, and the gold typography of the title *SORE*.

The poster's five main visual elements: color grading and palette, lighting, visual layering, framing composition, and typography. Each element is examined separately to identify its layers of meaning, then synthesized to produce a holistic interpretation of the sign systems that shape the representation of time and women in the film poster.

Critical studies have long looked at the role of women in Indonesian film posters. (Nahda et al., 2024) examines the *Gadis Kretek* series and shows that Barthes's semiotics successfully breaks down the social construction of women in Indonesian popular culture. According to the study Nugroho et al. (2024) Regarding the *Siksa Kubur* film poster, the poster's visual elements always contain ideological meanings that must be read critically. The results reinforce the importance of this research in examining representation and its pedagogical implications for creating visual literacy teaching materials.

The aims of this study are to find a visual sign system that shows the concept of time on the *SORE* film poster; to see how visual elements such as color gradation, lighting, layering, framing, and typography contribute to the formation of temporal meaning; to understand the audience's perception of the representation of women and time; and to explain the impact of this study as the development of visual literacy teaching materials in DKV education.

## **METHOD**

### **Interpretative Qualitative Semiotic Analysis**

Roland Barthes' semiotic framework used in this study divides the meaning of signs into three levels: denotation as literal and descriptive meaning, connotation related to cultural, historical, and ideological meaning, and myth that represents ideology naturalized through the sign system. The analysis was conducted systematically on five main visual elements: color gradation, lighting, layering, framing composition, and typography.

### **Audience Perception Analysis**

This study used an in-depth interview method with five informants who were selected purposively, taking into account diversity in terms of age, gender, and profession. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, using three main questions as a guide:

1. initial impression of the poster;
2. how informants understand the depiction of women in posters; And
3. messages related to time or period that are visible from the visual arrangement of the poster.

The participation of Visual Communication Design (DKV ) and Communication Science students in this study also has important value in the field of learning . When informants with art and design backgrounds read and interpret visual signs critically , this reflects the real application of visual literacy skills . It is important to note that Maslahah & Fitria (2023) shows that the use of poster media can significantly improve students' critical thinking skills . Based on this , the interviews in this study can also be seen as a simulation of the visual literacy learning process based on popular culture texts , an approach that has the potential to be developed as authentic learning material in visual semiotics courses .

**Validity and Legality**

The validity of the research data was ensured through several techniques. The first technique was a multi-faceted examination, combining two data collection approaches: analysis of the poster's visual text and interviews with the audience. The second technique was a cross-theoretic review, applying Barthes's semiotics and Stuart Hall's representation theory to examine the phenomenon from multiple perspectives. This study also employed member checking, which involved questioning informants to validate the accuracy of the collected data. Furthermore, the researcher practiced reflexivity, acknowledging and addressing the researcher's personal position and influence throughout the research process.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Barthes' Semiotic Matrix: An Overview of Visual Analysis**

Before explaining each element in depth, Table 1 presents a comprehensive matrix of Barthes's semiotic analysis of the six main visual elements of the film poster for *SORE: Istri dari Masa Depan*. From a teaching materials development perspective, this matrix can be used as a step-by-step guide taught to DKV students to analyze design works systematically and in layers. This guide functions like a learning ladder that helps students understand how to analyze in a structured manner, starting from the basic stages to more complex ones.

Table 1. Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis Matrix on the Film Poster *SORE: Wife from the Future*.

Visual Elements	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
Spiral Staircase	The circular building structure is seen from above with a design that gradually shrinks .	The rotation of time that does not move in a straight line , the cycle of life that is constantly repeated and without end .	Women who are trapped in a cycle of time that must be " solved " by getting married .
Female Multiplication	Three women wearing the same clothes at several points of the spiral	Different versions of oneself emerge over time , identity fragmentation as a way of finding the true	The ideal woman is a woman who is " perfect " through her role as a wife .

	staircase .	self .	
Color Grading (Warm-Neutral)	A color palette such as light brown , cream , and golden yellow dominates the entire frame .	The warm atmosphere in the house , nostalgia and temporary tranquility that longs for eternity .	Home and family are the main ideals for women .
Gold Typography "SORE"	Gold capital letters with serifs located at the top of the poster.	High quality characteristics and excellent value , " afternoon " as a transition time between day and night .	The afternoon can be interpreted as a symbol of a woman's transition towards an "ideal" life .
Male Position	A man stood upright at the top of the stairs , looking down .	Strength and control , men as " observers " of the passage of time for women .	Men are the ones who determine the direction and targets of women's life journey .
Lighting	Light radiates from the top ( the apex of the spiral) creating a transition between light and dark .	Resurrection and the meaning of life that comes from above , hope that is a guide .	Pleasure and perfection are things that women strive for from the low to the high .

Sasmita et al. (2024) confirmed that the development of digital poster-based learning media has been proven to significantly improve students' conceptual understanding . Thus, Barthes's three-level matrix framework, as presented in Table 1, has the potential to be adapted as a visual literacy evaluation instrument in the DKV curriculum. This approach teaches students not to stop at reading the visual surface but to penetrate deeper layers of cultural and ideological meaning .

**Representation of Time Through Spiral Stairs and Layering**

The most striking element in the poster for SORE: Wife from the Future is the spiral staircase, seen from a bird's-eye view. Literally, this spiral staircase is a common interior design feature in modern, minimalist buildings. However, connotatively, this spiral structure carries a deeper meaning related to the representation of time.(Circle Z Creative Media, 2025).

As a visual symbol, the spiral has its origins in cross-cultural traditions as a symbol of the cycle of life and the circular flow of time. In the context of this poster, the spiral staircase serves as a temporal metaphor: time in the film SORE does not proceed in a straight line, but rather in a repetitive, layered vortex.Sirajuddin et al. (2025)notes that the use of spiral architectural elements in contemporary Indonesian films consistently marks temporal liminality related to women's experiences.

In the context of developing teaching materials, this spiral staircase element can serve as a concrete example of how designers use the arrangement of form and space to communicate abstract concepts like time. Visual Communication Design students can be trained to identify how this compositional choice works on three levels simultaneously, thereby developing their ability to read a design holistically from various angles.

### **Color Grading: Naturalized Temporality**

The poster for *SORE: The Wife of the Future* is dominated by a color palette that could be classified as a warm neutral beige-cream: a light beige-brown base against the material of the spiral staircase (perhaps concrete or white marble with a warm glow). The recurring female character's costume is a dark navy blue, creating a balanced color contrast against the warm background.

Connotatively, this choice of a warm neutral palette works against what is typically expected from posters for sci-fi or time-travel films, which typically use neon blue or high-contrast colors to suggest technology and futurism. The color scheme in Indonesian romantic film posters acts as an “ideological statement” that assumes a certain understanding of time as natural and universal. (Putra & Ersyad, 2026).

Color grading, as a method of color grading in film post-production, plays a crucial role in distinguishing time periods and moods within the visual storyline. The specific use of brown and light blue creates a melancholic atmosphere that directly influences how the audience perceives the time and emotions depicted in the narrative. (Almaas Yanaayuri & Putu Suhada Agung, 2022).

The chosen color scheme not only helps to visually differentiate time, but also internalizes the idea that a warm and comfortable future is something “natural” and “reachable,” making the nonlinear temporality presented in the film feel closer and less frightening.

### **Lighting: A Metaphor for Life's Purpose**

The lighting in the poster for *SORE: Wife from the Future* plays a crucial role as a medium for “painting with light,” where the lighting arrangement not only illuminates the scene but also creates a profound symbolic meaning. The spiral staircase, shot from a top angle, receives a warm glow that illuminates the white concrete or marble surface, creating a transition from the darkness at the bottom of the spiral.

Light can broaden the view, provide direction, enable people to move freely, and move towards their goals. (Illahi & Yandri, 2025). In the *SORE* poster, the lighting focused from the top down the stairs where a woman meets a man suggests that the “goal” or “culmination” of the time travel is domestic interaction and relationships, rather than personal or technological achievement.

Lighting is an effort to arrange the intensity, direction and color of light so that objects are clearly visible and create an atmosphere that suits the purpose. (AdPlay Media, 2025). In this poster, the warm light is concentrated at the top while the bottom gets darker, creating a visual hierarchy that emphasizes that the “future” to be achieved is at the top of the spiral on the male side, while the past or incomplete version of oneself is submerged in darkness below.

In the world of cinematography, the application of light and shadow patterns is often done to add symbolic depth and tension to a work, where lighting plays a crucial role in making the scene appear clear and express a deeper emotional message. (IDS Education, 2024) As a basic component of cinematography, light exposure not only functions in the functional aspect so that the scene appears clear, but also plays a contextual role in creating a psychological narrative through setting the mood and visual artistic value. (Ichsan Medina M, 2024). The lighting used

in the SORE poster is not just a separation between light and dark areas, but also emphasizes the idea that the purpose of a woman's life is to achieve "completeness" through a relationship with a partner, building a household destiny as something shining, clear and worthy of being achieved.

This analysis of light can be used as a basic exercise in the classroom. Visual Communication Design students could be asked to compare lighting on film posters from various genres to understand how lighting is used not only as a technical element but also to create specific meanings.

### **Framing: Perspective Power in a Bird's Eye View**

The choice to use a top-down (Bird's Eye View) angle is the most important framing decision in this poster. Technically, this angle allows the entire spiral staircase and all its occupants to be seen in a single frame. However, in a semiotic context, the Bird's Eye View angle conveys a powerful sense of surveillance and control. The figures in the poster appear small compared to the staircase structure. The male figure at the top of the frame faces forward, while the tallest female figure faces upward.

Bird's Eye View in cinematography has a strong connotation as a "demand image", a perspective from a position that observes the whole without participating in it. (Joni Ahmad, 2025). In the context of the SORE poster, this perspective produces two simultaneous semiotic effects: first, it presents the entire spiral as a single system, the viewer seeing a single "time map" connecting the various iterations and female figures. Second, it creates a unique viewing relationship between the viewer and the figures: the viewer is "outside of time," witnessing into the time-based system contained within the film.

The position of the male figure facing forward (towards the future or past) and the female figure facing upwards (towards the viewer) creates an inequality of gaze that directs the gaze upwards (towards the camera), making the woman a subject who "speaks" to the viewer, not just being watched.

(Farikhin & Revan Mediva, 2025) An analysis of the poster for the film "Jatuh Cinta Seperti di Film-Film" also revealed that the perspective used in Indonesian film posters often reflects a certain power. This finding supports the view that understanding framing can be an interesting topic in Visual Semiotics classes. Students can be encouraged to compare perspectives across various film posters to observe recurring patterns of meaning or ideology.

### **Typography: Semiotics of Letters and the Construction of Identity**

The "SORE" typography is prominently displayed in large font at the top of the poster, using gold with a prominent serif design. This approach creates a clear visual distinction between the main title (which is large, gold, and striking). The names of the director "A FILM BY YANDY LAURENS" and the actors (SHEILA DARA, DION WIYOKO) are displayed in a smaller, white typeface with a light style. The placement of the text on the top left side of the poster creates a strong visual structure.

In a denotative context, 'SORE' describes the transition from day to night, a period rich with conflicting atmospheres. Connotatively, 'sore' is a representative time that represents change, transition, and a crucial moment between two different conditions. For women, 'sore' functions

as a depiction of the relationship between single and married status, between the past and the future, and between self-identity and the 'wife of the future'.

The gold color in typography operates on two simultaneous levels. In a connotative context, gold symbolizes value, luxury, and privilege, but on the other hand, it also represents "twilight gold," the color of light in the afternoon, which is the primary visual symbol of the concept of "afternoon" in the general view. This creates a chromatic relationship between typography and the concept of time in the title: the gold text is associated with "afternoon." The film presents something considered "precious." In a mythical layer, gold evokes the traditional association with wedding rings even before the film's content is revealed.

These typographic elements can be an interesting aspect of visual semiotics teaching, as they demonstrate that the choice of typeface and color serves not only an aesthetic purpose but also a meaningful purpose. Students can be taught to observe the typography on various Indonesian film posters and then describe the messages and impressions generated by these letter choices. With this approach, typography is not understood as an additional element, but rather as a crucial component that contributes to the meaning of the poster.

### **The Multiplication of Women: Fragmentation of Identity and the Myth of Perfection**

One of the most striking design elements in the SORE poster is the appearance of several similar-looking women, wearing identical clothing, and positioned at different points on the spiral staircase. This directly reflects the presence of several women with comparable appearances in different positions. In terms of meaning, this doubling of female figures can be interpreted as a representation of oneself that changes over time and as a journey in the search for identity. However, on a deeper level, it can also convey the impression that women's identities are considered incomplete until they are married. This aligns with research on gender representation in Indonesian film posters, which shows that posters are not a neutral medium, but rather are imbued with ideological interests reflected through their form, style, and representational strategies. (Putra & Ersyad, 2026).

This result is also supported by research (Nugroho et al., 2024) which reveals that the doubling of figures in Indonesian film posters is often used to depict duality or split character identities, thus requiring a critical reading as it contains ideological messages. In the SORE poster, the uniform clothing and the label "wife from the future" create a strong impression of women's roles being directed towards a particular identity, making it crucial to discuss them in gender studies. Therefore, this representation of women should be a critical topic of discussion in the classroom, particularly in courses on Visual Semiotics, Cultural Studies, or Communication. Semiotic analysis of film posters can also help students critically understand visual signs and become aware of the ideologies behind popular culture products. In this way, the skill of unraveling gender myths in visual texts becomes an essential element of critical literacy that must be developed in communication and design education.

### **Interview Results: Audience Perspective**

Thematic analysis of the interview data yielded three main themes. First, all informants were able to perceive the aspect of time through various visual elements, ranging from the symbolism of the circular staircase, warm colors representing the past, the doubling of faces reminiscent of the sound of an alarm, to the gold lettering and the afternoon symbol as a transition. Second, the gender position and dominance in the poster were clearly observed by informants from

graphic design backgrounds and DKV students, who showed a visual hierarchy that placed men as the director or dominant figure, while women were considered as supporting objects or parties asked to adapt. Third, the myth of domestication and the ideal role of women through marriage was strongly expressed by female informants (both students and housewives), who felt a subtle pressure that women's duty was to complement men and must 'complete' themselves in the future through the institution of marriage.

Table 2. Results of interviews on audience perceptions of the SORE film poster

Informant	Profile	Perception on Poster	Interpretation of the Meaning of Time & Women
I-1	Female, 20 years old , member of journalism	The woman seems trapped in the same circle , spinning endlessly , where the spiral staircase stretches with a mysterious aura that depicts the depth of time and the burden of life .	There is an impression that women cannot escape their roles , because time is depicted as circular , not linear.
I-2	Male , 28 years old , graphic designer	Taking pictures from top to bottom creates a striking visual effect . The use of warm colors such as orange , brown , and golden brings a soft past nuance and feminine effect .	Women are represented as " repeaters " of time , while men exist as directors .
I-3	Female, 21 years old , Communication Science student	The multiplication of women's faces is powerful . According to communication students , <i>Sore's</i> recurring face in the poster symbolizes the recurrence of time , reminding us , like an alarm that keeps ringing until we wake up .	The myth of the ideal wife is very much present ; women are positioned as objects that complement men .
I-4	Male , 22 years old , DKV student	The gold typography looks luxurious , with a clear visual hierarchy and a dominant male figure .	The poster " calls " women to change ; the symbol of time ( <i>afternoon</i> ) is associated with transition .
I-5	Female, 35 years old , housewife	The poster feels warm and familiar ; the colors used are reminiscent of home .	There is a subtle pressure that women should be " done " with themselves in the future through marriage .

Interview data supports the findings of the semiotic analysis and also indicates that the SORE film poster is indeed relevant as learning material. Interviewees with educational backgrounds in design and communication tended to provide more focused and systematic analysis. Meanwhile, interviewees with journalistic backgrounds and housewives responded more to the poster from an emotional perspective and personal experience. This difference in interpretation

is crucial for the learning process, as interviews like this can be used in the classroom to train students in identifying the differences between more practiced visual reading and general perception.

### **Recommendations for Developing Visual Literacy Teaching Materials Based on Film Posters**

Based on the findings outlined, this study proposes a framework for developing visual literacy teaching materials based on film poster analysis, which can be applied in the Visual Communication Design curriculum. The framework includes three important stages: identification, interpretation, and myth deconstruction. In the identification stage, students are asked to identify the main visual elements in their chosen film poster and explain their denotative meaning. In the interpretation stage, students analyze the connotative meaning of each element by linking it to the Indonesian cultural and historical context. Meanwhile, in the myth deconstruction stage, students are invited to discuss and examine the ideology that appears to be internalized in the poster. This framework aligns with the research findings. (Wiraseptya & Stefvanly, 2024) which shows that collaboration between the DKV study program and educational institutions in designing teaching materials based on visual communication can improve the quality of learning and produce more effective materials. By using the film poster entitled SORE as an illustration, the development of visual literacy teaching materials rooted in popular culture can be integrated into courses such as Visual Semiotics, Design Theory, and Cultural and Media Studies.

### **CONCLUSION**

A study of the poster for the film SORE: Istri dari Masa Depan shows that this visual medium does not merely function as a promotional tool, but also presents as a cultural text laden with ideological layers and has the potential to become a source of visual literacy learning. Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis combined with audience interviews shows that the representation of time is constructed through the symbol of the spiral staircase, lighting, a warm color palette, gold typography, and the doubling of female figures.

The visual interpretation confirms that the spiral staircase and the multiplication of women represent the recurring cycle of life. Meanwhile, the lighting and bird's-eye view framing position men as dominant figures. The golden typography that reads SORE marks a symbol of transition to a life considered ideal. The findings of the audience interviews reinforce the results of the semiotic analysis: female informants highlighted the subtle pressure that women must "complete themselves" through the institution of marriage, while male informants emphasized the visual dominance of the male figure as a guide.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes important pedagogical implications. Film posters such as SORE: Istri dari Masa Depan can be utilized as authentic teaching materials to train students' contextual semiotic analysis skills. Barthes' three-level framework used in this study has the potential to be adapted as a teaching module or visual literacy evaluation instrument in the DKV curriculum. By integrating film poster analysis into visual semiotics learning, educators can encourage students to become more than passive consumers of visual culture, but rather critical readers capable of recognizing and negotiating the gender and temporal constructions behind each design.

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