

Peircean Semiotic Analysis of the Film Poster Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa: Representation of Sin and Morality

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Abstract

Movie posters not only serve as promotional tools but also as visual communication media that convey deep messages related to the themes and values presented in the film. The poster for Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa is particularly interesting to analyze due to its complex use of visual elements and text in representing moral conflict, sin, and redemption. This study aims to identify and analyze the meanings of icons, indexes, and symbols in the film poster using Peircean semiotics. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a Peircean semiotic analysis technique, which classifies signs into three main categories: icons, indexes, and symbols. The findings reveal that the iconography of the main characters' faces reflects inner conflict and emotional turmoil, the color index and character positioning depict a spiritual journey and moral value opposition, while the symbolism in the title and golden color represents the moral paradox emphasized in the film. In conclusion, the Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa poster is not merely aesthetic but also rich in meaning, allowing for diverse interpretations among audiences. This study highlights the importance of semiotic analysis in understanding visual communication in film media

I. Introduction

A film poster is one of the key elements in a movie's marketing campaign, functioning not only as a promotional tool but also as a medium that conveys visual messages about the film's theme, genre, and atmosphere. An effective poster can capture the attention of potential audiences while inviting them to reflect on the deeper messages contained within the film. The film poster for "*Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa*" (God, Allow Me to Sin) is particularly interesting to analyze because it uses complex visual and textual elements to communicate sensitive themes such as sin, forgiveness, and morality. This film, directed by Hanung Bramantyo and released in 2023, is adapted from the novel *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur!* (God, Allow Me to Become a Prostitute!) by Muhidin Dahlan (Siahaan, 2024). The story follows the emotional journey of Kiran, a devout woman caught in a moral dilemma between her religious beliefs and life's harsh realities. The poster is designed to reflect her inner conflict and character transformation, making it a rich object for semiotic analysis.

This research is important because film posters are not merely promotional tools, but also visual artworks that carry symbolic and cultural meanings. Through a semiotic approach—particularly Peircean semiotics—we can uncover the hidden layers of meaning within the visual and textual elements of the poster. Peircean semiotics, which classifies signs into icons, indexes, and symbols, provides a comprehensive analytical framework to understand how visual and textual elements interact in delivering messages (Peirce, 1931). This approach has been used in previous studies, such as the analysis of the *Jojo Rabbit* film poster (Andiara & Muhdaliha, 2022) and *Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini* (Fahida, 2021), showing its relevance in interpreting visual meaning.

Relevant previous research includes the study by Andiara & Muhdaliha (2022), which analyzed moral messages in the *Jojo Rabbit* film poster using Roland Barthes' semiotics. The study found that the visual and textual elements in the poster effectively conveyed complex moral messages through the symbols presented. Another study by Fahida (2021) applied Barthes' semiotics to the poster of *Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini* and revealed how visual elements such as color, typography, and imagery were used to communicate emotional themes. Both studies demonstrate that semiotic approaches are effective in interpreting visual meaning, although few have utilized Peircean semiotics to analyze film posters, especially in the context of Indonesian cinema.

The aim of this study is to analyze the hidden meanings in the film poster of "*Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa*" using Peircean semiotics, focusing on the three categories of signs: icon, index, and symbol. This research seeks to understand how the visual and textual elements in the poster interact to convey complex themes such as sin, forgiveness, and morality, and how Kiran's character transformation is represented through these elements.

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a Charles Sanders Peirce semiotic approach. Data were obtained from analyzing the visual and textual elements of the "*Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa*" film poster, which were then categorized into the three types of signs: icon,

index, and symbol. The analysis involves identifying both the denotative and connotative meanings of each visual and textual element and relating them to the film's social and cultural context.

This research is expected to contribute to the academic field of semiotic studies, particularly in the analysis of film posters. In addition, it may serve as a reference for film producers and distributors in designing effective and meaningful posters. For viewers, this study can help enhance understanding of the visual messages embedded in film posters, thereby increasing appreciation for these visual artworks.

2. Literature Review

Semiotics, as the study of signs and meaning, has been widely used in the analysis of visual artworks, including film posters. According to Peirce (1931), signs can be categorized into three types: icon, index, and symbol (Solihin et al., 2018). An icon is a sign that bears a physical resemblance to the object it represents; an index is a sign that has a causal or direct connection with its object; and a symbol is a sign whose meaning is determined by social or cultural convention. This Peircean semiotic approach has been applied in various studies to analyze visual meaning, such as in the research by Andiara & Muhdaliha (2022), which applied Roland Barthes' semiotics to the film poster *Jojo Rabbit*. The study found that the visual and textual elements in the film poster were able to convey complex moral messages through the use of embedded symbols. This research demonstrates that semiotic analysis can reveal hidden layers of meaning in visual artworks, including film posters.

As a visual medium, the film poster plays a significant role in conveying the theme, genre, and mood of a film to potential audiences. According to Kernan (2004), film posters are designed to capture attention and communicate the film's main messages through visual elements such as color, typography, and imagery. A study by Fahida (2021), which applied Barthes' semiotics to the film poster *Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini*, revealed how visual elements such as color, typography, and images were used to convey emotional themes. The results of this study indicate that film posters serve not only as promotional tools but also as media that communicate deep messages about a film's themes and conflicts. Thus, the Peircean semiotic approach can be applied to the analysis of the film poster "*Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa*" to understand how its visual and textual elements convey themes of sin, forgiveness, and morality.

3. Methodology

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a Peircean semiotic approach. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative methods are suitable for exploring symbolic and contextual meanings in complex research objects, such as film posters. The Peircean semiotic approach is chosen due to its ability to identify signs through three categories: icon, index, and symbol (Peirce, 1931). The first step involves collecting visual and textual data from the film poster, including elements such as color, typography, and imagery. These data are then analyzed by identifying the signs that fall into each of the three categories.

The next step is the interpretation of the denotative and connotative meanings of each sign. Denotation refers to the literal meaning, while connotation refers to the hidden or associated meaning influenced by cultural context (Chandler, 2017). For example, the color black can be denotatively understood as a dark color, but connotatively it may symbolize grief or evil. This analysis takes into account the narrative context of the film and Indonesian cultural background to understand how the visual and textual elements in the poster communicate the themes of sin, forgiveness, and morality.

4. Results and Discussion

Object Description

The poster for the film *"Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa"* features a dramatic and meaningful visual design. The film title is written in bold text, using a graceful and dramatic typographic style, with golden coloring that conveys a sense of elegance as well as contemplation. This golden hue also creates a strong contrast with the background of the poster, which is dominated by a gradient from dark to light tones, dividing the poster into two symbolically distinct sections.

On the left side of the poster appears Aghniny Haque, who plays the main character, Kiran. She is depicted wearing a syar'i hijab and a maroon-colored outfit. Her body is turned to the left, with the photo taken from a side angle, creating a dramatic and mysterious impression. Her serious facial expression and downward gaze reflect the inner conflict experienced by the character. The maroon color of her clothing symbolizes both courage and emotional turmoil.

On the right side of the poster is an image of Djenar Maesa Ayu, shown in an inverted position. Djenar wears a headscarf that loosely covers her hair, paired with a cream-colored outfit that gives off a neutral yet ambiguous impression. Her upside-down photo symbolizes instability or a shift in identity. Additionally, the poster features the male cast members — Donny Damara, Andri Mashadi, Samo Rafael, and Nugie — lined up facing in the opposite direction of the female characters. Their opposing orientation represents the conflict or tension within the storyline.

The background of the poster is split into two sections: the left side is dominated by deep black tones, while the right side transitions from dark to light. This division not only creates strong

visual contrast but also symbolizes the emotional or spiritual journey of the main character from darkness toward enlightenment. Overall, the poster is designed to capture attention while conveying complex themes such as sin, forgiveness, and morality through symbolic visual elements.



Figure 1. Poster of the Film *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa*

In this section, the researcher will conduct an in-depth analysis of the poster for the film *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa* based on the findings obtained through a Peircean semiotic approach. This analysis will examine the three categories of signs—icon, index, and symbol—to uncover the hidden meanings within the visual elements and text of the poster. The researcher will explore

how the images of the main character, the color palette, typography, and visual composition interact to convey complex themes such as sin, forgiveness, and morality. Additionally, the analysis will consider the cultural and social context behind the film, providing a holistic understanding of the message intended to be conveyed through the poster. Thus, this discussion is expected to reveal layers of deep meaning and offer new insights into the visual representation in film posters.

Table 1 results of identification of visual elements in the film God Allows Me to Sin

Category	Elements in a Poster	Interpretation of Meaning
Icon	The faces of the main actors	Reflects inner conflict and emotional tension
	Difference in character positions (Kiran facing left, Djenar upside down)	Symbol of introspection and moral instability
Index	Black is dominant on the left side, gradation towards light on the right side	Symbolizes moral darkness vs. spiritual hope.
	Kiran's maroon hijab	Representation of firmness of principles and beliefs
	Djenar's more revealing cream dress	Indicates moral ambiguity or a search for identity.
	The opposing positions between male and female characters	Depicting the conflict of moral values in the film
Symbol	Title "God Allows Me to Sin"	A paradox depicting inner conflict and spiritual journey
	Golden color on the title	A symbol of divinity and spirituality in contrast to the grim reality

Icon Analysis in the Movie Poster God Allow Me to Sin

In Peircean semiotic analysis, an icon is a sign that has a direct resemblance to the object it represents (Chandler, 2022). In the context of the film poster *Tuhan Ijinkan Aku Berdosa*, the faces of the main characters function as icons that visually represent the psychological and emotional conditions of the characters in the film. The serious and tense facial expressions of the character Kiran (Aghniny Haque) and other characters indicate a deep inner conflict. Recent research has shown that facial expressions in visual media play a significant role in building audience perceptions of character emotions and psychology (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021).

Aghniny Haque's face as Kiran is shown with a tense expression, a sharp gaze, and a slightly downturned face angle. This gives the impression of being introspective and full of moral burden. A study by Machin and Pollick (2020) states that the angle of the shot in visual representation can influence the audience's perception of the character, where a lower or side angle is often associated with vulnerability or self-reflection. In this poster, the angle of Kiran's face pointing to the left further emphasizes the reflective elements and internal conflict faced by the character.

On the other hand, the different positions of the characters, especially Djenar Maesa Ayu who is shown upside down, adds layers of meaning to this poster. The upside down position in visual iconography is often used to symbolize instability, disorientation, or a drastic change in perspective (Forceville, 2019). In a film that raises the theme of morality and sin, this representation can be interpreted as a form of inner restlessness or spiritual imbalance experienced by the character.

The combination of the cast's facial icons and the contrasting visual composition between Kiran and Djenar also serves to show thematic opposition in the film. According to Barthes' research (2018), the use of facial iconography in film poster design is often a key element in building an implicit narrative. Kiran's face is shown in an upright position with a serious expression, in contrast to Djenar's face which is positioned upside down, signifying two opposing worlds—perhaps between morality and rebellion, or between steadfastness and uncertainty.

In addition, the colors used in the representation of facial icons also have an influence on emotional interpretation. Kiran wears a maroon hijab, which in color semiotics can be interpreted as a symbol of strength, determination, or even conflict (Van Leeuwen, 2020). Meanwhile, Djenar wears a cream dress with a hijab that shows part of her hair, which can be associated with openness or even moral ambiguity. This choice of color further emphasizes the contrast between the two main characters in the film, which is shown through their facial iconography.

The influence of facial icons in building emotional tension is also supported by the principle of multimodal semiotics. According to Bateman et al. (2021), human faces in visual media have a high appeal in building audience emotions because of the face's ability to express various psychological nuances. In the poster for *God Allows Me to Sin*, the use of facial icons with intense expressions can provoke the audience to interpret the hidden meaning in the story raised by the film.

In addition to the emotional aspect, the face icon in this poster also has a narrative function. The selected image often serves as an initial representation of the main conflict in the film (Barnard, 2019). By presenting the main character in a dramatic expression and position, this poster indirectly communicates to potential viewers that this film will raise a story with complex emotional dynamics and full of moral dilemmas.

Furthermore, the difference in character positions can also be related to the concept of spatial semiotics in film visualization. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2021), visual layouts in posters or other visual media often follow a binary opposition pattern, where elements placed on the left are often associated with the past or self-reflection, while elements on the right represent the future or change. Thus, Kiran's position facing left and Djenar's reversed position on the right can be interpreted as a conflict between introspection and moral turmoil, which is the main theme in the film.

In Peircean semiotic analysis, icons function not only as visual representations but also as emotional and conceptual communication tools (Danesi, 2021). The film poster for *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Bersin* shows how the iconography of the faces and positions of the characters can be used to convey the internal and moral conflicts that are at the heart of the story. By understanding these elements, we can see how visuals in the film medium function not only as aesthetics but also as a means of conveying profound meaning .

Index Analysis in the Movie Poster *God Allow Me to Sin*

In Peircean semiotic theory, an index is a sign that has a causal or existential relationship to the object it represents (Chandler, 2022). An index not only represents something visually but also provides clues to deeper meanings based on associations that have formed in culture or human experience (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). In the context of the film poster *Tuhan Ijinkan Aku Bersin*, several visual elements function as indices that hint at the themes of morality, the search for identity, and the conflict of values raised in the film.

1. *Black on the Left Side and Light Gradation on the Right Side*

One of the most prominent elements in this poster is the use of pitch black on the left side that gradually changes to light colors on the right side. In color semiotics, black is often associated with darkness, mystery, or even moral decline (Van Leeuwen, 2020). Conversely, light colors are often associated with hope, enlightenment, or spiritual transformation (Bateman et al., 2021). This color transition becomes an index that hints at the character's journey in the film—possibly from a life of sin to a search for forgiveness or spiritual awareness.

This gradation can also be interpreted as a representation of duality in human life, where individuals are always between two poles: darkness and light, sin and virtue, error and truth (Forceville, 2019). By placing Kiran on the dark side and Djenar in the lighter area, this poster seems to want to hint at the dynamics of opposing characters, but interconnected in their journey.

2. *Kiran's Maroon Hijab as a Representation of Firmness of Principle*

The maroon hijab worn by Kiran also functions as an index indicating belief and steadfastness of principle. In the study of color semiotics, red is often associated with strength, courage, and determination (Machin & Pollick, 2020). However, in a religious context, red can also reflect sacrifice or inner struggle (Danesi, 2021).

By showing Kiran in a maroon hijab, the poster suggests that the character may have strong principles but is facing a tough moral test. This is in line with research showing that clothing elements in films often function as indices that represent a character's identity and struggles (Barnard, 2019).

3. *Djenar's More Open Cream Dress as an Index of Moral Ambiguity*

In contrast, Djenar's cream-colored dress with a hijab that reveals part of her hair indicates moral ambiguity or a search for identity. In the semiotics of clothing, openness in clothing is often associated with freedom, rebellion, or identity transition (Chandler, 2022). The color cream itself is often associated with neutrality or uncertainty (Van Leeuwen, 2020).

Djenar, who is shown in this costume, can be interpreted as a character who is experiencing a moral dilemma or is searching for her identity amidst conflicting values. This reinforces the idea that this film is not only discussing the issue of sin and forgiveness, but also how individuals grapple with complex moral values.

4. *The Opposite Positions of Male and Female Characters as an Index of Value Conflict*

The poster also features male characters facing off against female characters, creating a visual opposition that reflects the conflict of moral values in the film. According to Barthes (2018), the layout of characters in a visual composition can function as an index indicating power relations, social hierarchies, or thematic tensions in the narrative.

In this context, the opposing positions between male and female characters can be interpreted as representing the tension between social norms and individual freedom, or between authority and rebellion. Research by Bateman et al. (2021) shows that positional contrasts in visual media are often used to clarify the conflict that is central to the narrative of a film or work of art.

In addition, the fact that the male characters have serious expressions and face different directions also serves as an index that shows the differences in their perspectives and views on the moral conflict in the film. This is in line with Forceville's (2019) study which shows that body orientation in film posters can provide clues about power dynamics and tensions between characters.

Symbol Analysis in the Movie Poster *God Allows Me to Sin*

In Peircean semiotics, a symbol is a sign that has an arbitrary relationship to the object it represents and relies on social convention or agreement to be understood (Chandler, 2022). Symbols do not have a direct relationship to objects, but rather acquire their meaning through cultural understanding, religion, or collective experience (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). In the context of the film poster *Tuhan Ijinkan Aku Berdosa*, there are two main symbols that stand out, namely the film title and the golden color of the title.

1. *Title *God Allows Me to Sin* as a Spiritual Paradox*

The title of the film *God Let Me Sin* immediately presents a paradox that invites the audience to reflect on the meaning behind it. The word "God" is usually associated with goodness, morality, and forgiveness, while "sin" refers to actions that go against religious values. Combining these two opposing concepts creates a strong tension of meaning, indicating the inner conflict that is at the heart of the film's narrative.

The paradox in this title serves as a symbol of a complex spiritual journey. In various studies of religious semiotics, the use of this kind of contradiction is often intended to reflect the human experience of facing moral dilemmas and searching for the meaning of life (Danesi, 2021). This title invites the audience to question how far a person can seek freedom within the moral boundaries that have been determined by religion or social norms (Machin & Pollick, 2020).

2. *Symbol of Resistance against Religious Norms*

In the context of social discourse, the phrase "God Allows Me to Sin" can be interpreted as a form of individual rebellion against strict religious norms. Several studies have shown that in popular culture, the use of contradictory language like this is often used to reflect resistance to moral authority that is considered oppressive (Forceville, 2019).

The title is not just a provocative sentence, but also a symbol of the value conflict faced by individuals in real life. This is in line with Barnard's (2019) research which shows that

symbols in film titles are often designed to create emotional engagement with the audience and spark debate about social issues raised in the film.

3. *Title as a Reflection of the Search for Identity*

In addition to representing spiritual conflict, this title can also be interpreted as a symbol of the search for identity. In a society experiencing changing values, many individuals face a dilemma between strictly following religious teachings or adapting to a more flexible social reality (Bateman et al., 2021).

Carrying a title like this, the film seems to want to highlight how the characters in the story experience a struggle between belief and personal freedom. This is in line with Van Leeuwen's research (2020) which states that symbols in visual media are often used to convey a deeper narrative about the existential struggle of humans.

4. *Golden Color as a Symbol of Divinity and Spirituality*

In addition to the phrase in the title, the golden color used in the title text also has a strong symbolic meaning. In color semiotics, gold is often associated with glory, majesty, and something divine (Chandler, 2022). The use of this color indicates that there is a spiritual aspect that is an important part of the story of this film.

In various cultural and religious traditions, the color gold is also often used to symbolize enlightenment or purity. For example, in religious iconography, the color gold is often used in ancient paintings to depict holy figures or divine beings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). In the context of this movie poster, the use of the color gold can be interpreted as a symbol of hope for forgiveness or spiritual transformation experienced by the main character.

5. *Contrast between Gold Color and Gloomy Background*

Another uniqueness of this poster is the contrast between the golden color in the title and the background of the poster which tends to be dark and gloomy. In visual semiotics, color contrasts like this are often used to depict conflict or duality in the story being conveyed (Bateman et al., 2021).

display in gold amidst the dark tones, this poster creates a symbol that shows that even though the main character is in a state of sin and inner conflict, there is still the possibility of gaining light or enlightenment. This is in line with the religious concept that emphasizes that every individual, no matter how far they have gone astray, still has the opportunity to return to the right path (Forceville, 2019).

6. *Symbolism in the Perspective of the Audience*

From the audience's perspective, the symbols in the title and the golden color can have different interpretations depending on their cultural background and beliefs. Research by Danesi (2021) suggests that audiences with a strong religious background may see the title as controversial, while those with more liberal views may see it as an expression of individual freedom (Solihin, et al., 20220).

The symbolism in this poster not only reflects the content of the film, but also functions as a communication tool that provokes thought and invites the audience to interpret its own meaning.

Comparison with Similar Research in Semiotic Analysis of Film Posters

Semiotic analysis in movie posters has become an interesting field of study in visual communication studies. Several previous studies have shown that visual elements in movie posters not only function as promotional tools, but also as representations of ideology, cultural values, and moral messages that are intended to be conveyed to the audience (Chandler, 2022). In this context, the movie poster *Tuhan Ijinkan Aku Berdosa* can be compared to several other films that raise the themes of morality, religion, and social conflict through the use of certain visual elements. One relevant example is the movie *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (2009), which features the hijab as the main symbol in depicting the main character's conflict with religious and social norms. Sobur's study (2019) shows that the use of the hijab element in this movie poster is not just an Islamic identity, but also a visual communication tool that represents the tension between tradition and modernity, as can also be seen in the poster *Tuhan Ijinkan Aku Berdosa*.

In addition, Berger's (2020) research on the film poster *Dua Garis Biru* (2019) shows that the colors and facial expressions in the poster can build a complex narrative about the social issues raised in the film. The *Dua Garis Biru* poster uses soft pastel colors to communicate the issue of teenage pregnancy with a more emotional and empathetic approach. Meanwhile, the poster *Tuhan Ijinkan Aku Berdosa* takes a more dramatic visual approach with dark and light color contrasts to emphasize the moral dilemma and inner struggle experienced by the main character. The difference in the use of color shows how visual semiotics can be adapted to the theme of the film to influence the audience's interpretation of the message being conveyed. From a Peircean semiotic perspective, the choice of colors in these two posters can be categorized as icons, because they directly represent the emotional atmosphere in the film (Danesi, 2021).

Meanwhile, Hall's (2021) research on Hanung Bramantyo's film *Tanda Tanya* (2011) also provides interesting insights into how religious symbols can be used in film posters to construct diverse interpretations. In the *Tanda Tanya* poster, symbolic elements such as churches, mosques, and temples are placed in one visual composition that reflects the diversity and inter-religious conflict in Indonesia. This study found that viewers with different cultural backgrounds and beliefs have varying interpretations of the symbolic elements in the poster. Something similar can also be found in the poster for *Tuhan Ijinkan Aku Berdosa*, where visual elements such as maroon hijabs, cream clothing, and the position of the characters in the poster invite different interpretations depending on the viewer's perspective (Bateman et al., 2021).

From these various studies, it can be seen that film posters with social and religious themes often utilize semiotic elements to convey complex moral messages. The poster for *Tuhan Ijinkan Aku Berdosa* follows a similar pattern to previous films that use symbols and colors to build deeper meaning. However, what is different is the use of paradox in the film's title, which directly presents spiritual conflict at the linguistic and visual levels. Forceville's (2019) research states that the use of paradox in visual communication can increase the appeal and complexity of a media's interpretation, because it invites the audience to reflect more deeply on the message being conveyed.

5. Conclusion

A Peircean semiotic analysis of the poster for the film *Tuhan Ijinkan Aku Berdosa* reveals how the visual elements, colors, and composition in the poster not only function as aesthetic appeal, but also as communication tools that convey deep meanings about the themes of morality, sin, and forgiveness. In the three categories of signs—icons, indices, and symbols—the iconography of the main characters' faces reflects inner conflict and emotional tension, the color index and character positions indicate spiritual journeys and value conflicts, while the symbols in the title and the golden color represent the moral paradoxes raised in the film. With this semiotic approach, it can be concluded that film posters are able to become a powerful medium in conveying complex messages involving social, cultural, and religious aspects.

In addition, comparison with similar studies shows that the pattern of use of visual elements in social and religious-themed film posters tends to be similar, with an emphasis on symbolism that can build various interpretations among the audience. However, the poster for *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Berdosa* is unique in its use of the title paradox that explicitly reflects the spiritual dilemma of the main character. Thus, this study not only provides insight into the meaning of visuals in film media, but also emphasizes the importance of semiotic analysis in understanding how complex messages can be communicated through visual design elements.

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