

## Semiotic Analysis In Xo, Kitty Netflix Series

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to identify and interpret the relationship between signifier and signified in verbal and visual aspects on posters, trailers, and scenes of the Netflix series XO, Kitty. The research method used by the researcher was descriptive qualitative analysis with a semiotic approach. The data were collected by watching the Netflix series, capturing the screen and taking notes, collecting verbal and visual aspects, and analysed based on the signifiers and signs by applying Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory. The results show that in posters and visual elements such as backgrounds, character poses, and graphic elements functioned as markers that formed certain meanings regarding the theme and atmosphere of the series. In the trailers, the use of dialogue and visual montage identified the signifiers in which introduced the main characters and the conflicts that they faced. Analysis of scenes in the first episode revealed how verbal (dialogue) and visual (cinematography, setting) elements worked together to build narrative and characterization.*

**Keywords:** Ferdinand de Saussure, Netflix, Semiotic, Signified Signifier, XO Kitty



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication was a big part of people's daily lives. From ancient times until the modern era, the ability to communicate had developed effectively. Communication that we often encountered was communication used in exchanging information. The biggest role of communication was the transfer of information, understanding, and comprehension from someone, somewhere, or something to something, somewhere, or someone else (Sikula 2017).

Signs were important in communication to convey information, helping us to receive information and think. All signs on this earth could be analyzed with semiotics. Semiotics, according to etymology, came from the Greek 'semeion,' which meant sign. A sign was defined as a thing based on a social agreement that had been built, and a sign was considered to be able to replace something else (Sobur 2016). Saussure argued that signs were social things that applied in human life. The system according to Saussure was a sign system and a social system that was closely related. There were 3 triangles of Saussure's sign (Signified, Signifier, and Sign). The way of communication that we often encountered in everyday life was communication that used media as a basis for channeling ideas, one of which was film. Film was a communication method to convey messages with a combination of moving images (acting) and sound (Effendi 1986). Movies were also a field of study for semiotic analysis; movies were built with many signs that worked well to describe a message that would be conveyed to the audience.

As we knew, the supporting component to communicate a movie was its promotion. In a movie, there were movie posters and trailers, which were the biggest means of inviting people to watch the movie and providing information about when the movie would be shown or about

the scenes in the movie that contained information about the storyline and the characters of the cast. Posters were a combination of visuals and messages, and movies were one example of communication that was very easy to find (Sudjana & Rivai 2010). The trailer itself was an advertising medium that became public consumption to distribute media content to consumers (Kriyantono, 2006). The researcher used a Netflix series entitled XO, Kitty. The poster, trailer, and scenes were analyzed using a semiotic approach with Ferdinand de Saussure's theory. The focus was on signs and how verbal and visual signs could be understood by viewers of the series. This research used descriptive qualitative methods, taking data from several sources, including the researchers' own opinions and perspectives. The data were in the form of words (verbal) and images (visual).

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## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Previous Study**

Anggraheni et al. (2024) discussed *about Semiotic Analysis of Barbie Movie Poster*. It has a unique gesture on the poster. This research focused on highlighting the importance of visual & verbal in conveying something by using 3 theories, sign theory by Saussure, color theory by Wierzbicka, and verbal aspect theory by Dyer with the purpose of revealing the influence of poster communication efficiency from signs, symbols, and their meanings.

Efendi and Akhadiyahatni (2023) in their research, *Semiotics Analysis of Disney Animation Poster "LUCA"*, they stated that the LUCA character itself was a unique character. This study aimed at making the public better understand the visual meaning of the LUCA poster. They employed descriptive qualitative and used a semiotic approach by Roland Barthes.

Guzel (2023) in *Semiotic analysis of Fresh movie posters* analyzed the impulsive and explicit meanings of Fresh movies from internet sites and used a qualitative approach that focused on exploring the signs found through verbal and non-verbal aspects.

Syafria et al. (2023) analyzed how the trailer of the film Quarantine Tales can be used to communicate the COVID-19 quarantine to the audience. They used a qualitative approach with semiotic theory by Charles Sanders Peirce and showed representations of social problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in this film, such as poverty, cyberbullying, pornography, and family problems.

Mazeree et al. (2023) analyzed a trailer of the movie "Confession of a Shopaholic" using primary data. They focused on connecting the gap between denotation, connotation, and myth with audio-visual media facilitated by Roland Barthes' semiotic theory.

Wati and Ardiantari (2023) chose the movie *Insidious* because it has a lot of big fans in the world. She aimed to explore visual verbal signs from 4 series of *Insidious* movies *Insidious* (2011), *Insidious Chapter 2* (2013), *Insidious Chapter 3* (2015), and *Insidious The Last Key* (2018) interpreted with Roland Barthes semiotic theory.

Putri and Nurochman (2022) in their study *Semiotics Analysis of To The Boys Trilogy Movie Posters*, used the story of the first movie, *To The Boys* before the presence of XO, Kitty was the object of this study. This study focused on posters that have two elements, namely verbal and visuals. The purpose of this study was to find out the semiotic signs on the movie poster of

To the Boys and describe significantly what was displayed on the verbal and visual signs. This study was a qualitative and semiotic theory by Ferdinand de Saussure. The results showed in the form of verbal signs were advertising sentences, movie titles, movie distributors, taglines, release dates, and movie logos. The visual signs were through background illustrations on posters, character placement, and colors. Research by Annisa and Nurochman (2022) focused on illustrations on posters and also on characters and color gradations in them, my study focuses on the same thing but is distinguished by the presence of trailers and several scenes.

*Semiotic Analysis of the Animated Film Soul* was conducted by Islam and Incirkus (2022). This study pointed out that animated films connect children and adults comprehensively. Visually rich animated films enable easier understanding by various groups. The purpose of this study was to aesthetically analyze and understand the visual meaning of the animated film *Soul* through the journey of the main character, Joe Gardner. In their study, they focused on the visualization of Joe Gardner's personality from beginning to end, in other words, this study examines the entire *Soul* film.

Chaysalina and Nadya (2022) analyzed Posters of the Movie "The Boys in the Striped Pajamas (2008)". They claimed that posters had many meanings that needed to be conveyed to the audience with their signs. This study used the semiotic theory by Roland Barthes. It focused on the role of signs in the design of "The Boys in the Striped Pajamas" movie poster which is used as a visual medium to convey an overview of the content of the movie which also has many messages through images and text.

Mega and Tawami (2022) showed that posters play a great role in communicating what a movie wants to say to attract more viewers. Through a qualitative descriptive method, they discussed how the *Suspiria* movie poster can create and communicate messages in verbal & non-verbal aspects to the audience.

Ginting et al., (2022) their study focused on finding the verbal-visual signs used icons, indexes, and semiotic symbols based on the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce with the data source coming from the *Avengers Infinity War & End Game* movie.

Sihite et al., (2021) analyzed *Spongebob* movies that consisted of images (visuals) and subtitles. The study focused on qualitative audio and visual material throughout the film. Researchers found signs and visuals from objects through scenes that are cut and subtitled.

Aminu (2021) conducted research through a semiotic study of the film *Black Panther*, utilizing Peirce's theory to effectively convey messages that are often overlooked by audiences. The study aimed at shed light on the richness of African culture portrayed in the film. They explained that this movie dominantly used internet marketing, uploading teasers and posters to the Instagram. The purpose of this study was to analyze the various meanings of the implied signs in the poster. It was a qualitative study using four stages of data analysis methods, namely descriptive, formal analysis, interpretation, and evaluation as well as using semiotic theory by Charles Sanders Peirce. The research found various signs that had harmony between each other to support the message to be conveyed in the poster. It concluded that the visualization of the main illustration, supporting visuals, color, and evaluation also use the semiotics theory of Charles Sanders Peirce. The main illustrations, supporting visuals, colors, and typography displayed on the visual posters of *Bumi Manusia* give an implied picture of the history of the struggle for human rights. The human poster gives an implied picture of the history of the struggle of the Indonesian people during the colonization of the early 20th century between the

colonizers and the Indonesians. Colonization of the early 20th century between indigenous people and Dutch colonialism.

Utami et al., (2021) used the movie "Shutter Island" as an object and focused on the identification of meaning in semiotic signs by employing 3 theories, Saussure's sign theory, Wierzbicka's color theory, and Dyer's visual-verbal aspect theory. Moreover, Nurudeen et al., (2021). They investigated how semiotics reveals the visual and linguistic meanings of movie poster designers to the audience. They analyzed 6 posters using a qualitative approach and found that the visual mode is more prominent than the linguistic mode. Furthermore, Dianiya (2020) took the theme of the Parasite film story in her study Representation of Social Class in Film was *Semiotic Analysis of Roland Barthes Film Parasite*. It discussed about realistic class domination that can be found around and in everyday life and used Roland Barthes' semiotic theory of signs in the form of words, images, sounds, movements, and objects to describe the meaning of connotation, denotation, and myth.

Pauzan (2018) study centered on three prominent elements: icons, indexes, and symbols featured in the John Wick 1 film. The objective of the research was to investigate how viewers could precisely interpret the signs and symbols portrayed in the movie. Obradovic & Vujovic (2017) focused on the subject of film semiotics which is part of media semiology, for the general public to understand the language of film through basic analysis.

Zaimar (2017) in her study offered a semiotic review of horror films that aim to bring the audience to fear, tension, and negative emotions. The study used the theory of signifiers and signs, which resulted in the discovery of several ethical and semiotic problems related to the ability of the reality that occurs within, to break through the fictional representation identified by the signifiers and signs. The focus is on the main character, Valak, who brings this movie into horror and makes the audience able to get a high fear experience

## **2.2 Related Theory**

Signs are studied with the science of semiotics, some people call it semiology. Semiotic or Semiology refers to Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). (Sobur 2016) stated Semiotics is the study of objects and symbols in life. Starting from language, semiotics evolved into art and design. The basic idea of semiotics is message and code (Mudjiyanto & Nur, 2013). The basic concept that unites the traditions of semiotics is 'sign' which is defined as a stimulus designating something other than itself. Messages have a very important very important in communication. Signs points or refers to something that is not itself, while meaning or meaning is the relationship between the object or idea and the sign.

Saussure called the science he developed Semiology. Semiology, according to Saussure, is based on the assumption that as long as human actions and behaviors have meaning, or as long as they function as signs, there must be behind them a system of distinctions and conventions that make that meaning possible (Tinarbuko, 2008). The things that Ferdinand de Saussure saw when looking at various signs, can only be presented if the reader of the sign has the experience of representation. Saussure placed signs in the context of human communication by separating between what is called signifier and signified. A signifier is a meaningful sound or a meaningful scribble (material aspect), which is what is said and what is written or read. While the signified is a mental image, namely the thought or concept of the mental aspect of language (Sobur, 2004).

### 3. METHOD

The Netflix series "XO, Kitty" is the main source of data for this research. Data analysis is descriptive and qualitative with a semiotic approach, focusing on the relationship between signifier and signified. Data were collected through several steps, including watching the series, analysing the semiotic elements in the posters, trailers, and scenes, and classifying the data based on semiotic components according to Ferdinand de Saussure's theory. The result of this research is a mapping and summary of the visual and verbal elements contained in the series "XO, Kitty" through the semiotic approach.

### 4. RESULTS

The results of this study showed visual signs by posters and verbal signs in trailers and scenes in the Netflix series *XO, Kitty*.

#### 4.1 XO, Kitty Netflix Series Poster as Visual Sign

##### Tagline

The tagline, "From Jenny Han, a new 'To All The Boys I've Loved Before' story begins." The sentence indicated that the *XO, Kitty* series was still related to the previous story created by Jenny Han, who was also the author of the original novel *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*.

##### Series Title

The phrase "XO," which stood for "hugs and kisses," suggested affection and warmth, two elements that were central to Kitty's story. "XO, Kitty" was written in a bold and stylish font in a bright pink color. The pink color chosen for the text gave it a feminine and playful feel, in keeping with the teen and romance theme of the series. The use of color and font in this title was not only visually appealing, but also effective in conveying the mood and theme of the series to viewers.

##### Series Distributor

The logo and information about "XO, Kitty's" distribution platform, Netflix, emphasized that the series was only available on Netflix. In the image, words "ONLY ON" followed by the Netflix logo in red capital letters, which was very prominent and easily recognizable.

##### Release Date

The word "MAY" indicated the name of the month, May, which was the fifth month in the calendar. The number "18" indicated the 18th day of the month. In conclusion, "MAY 18" indicated that this text was the official release date for the series.

##### Background

The entire background in the poster tended to be bright in tone so it could attract the attention of the audience. Details of the city setting could be seen, which indicated that the series was set in a city, specifically in the capital of South Korea, Seoul. Flowering trees with detailed flower petals flying were also visible, meaning this series had many positive things and challenges for the main character.

##### Character Placement

The positions of the characters, which also played an important role in helping to inform the visual focus of this poster and provide spoilers about the characters' relationships.

#### 4.2 XO, Kitty Netflix Series Trailer as Verbal Sign

*"I know when two people are meant for each other. It's a feeling I get. I felt it for Lara*

*Jean and Peter. I felt it for you two. And I feel it for me and Dae.”*

Was a sign that the sequel to the previous series was about to begin, marked by the names Lara Jean and Peter, who were a couple in the previous series. In this scene, the show included interactions or glimpses of romantic moments between the main character, Kitty, and the couple mentioned

*“Remember I went to Grandma and Grandpa’s to clean their attic? Well, I found all this stuff of mom’s. I realized that she went to Korea for boarding school in her junior year of high school. Grandma told me that she got this in her junior year of high school. Grandma told me that she got this super-cool scholarship for Koreans living abroad to learn about their culture.”*

The uttered marked the flashback summary of the beginning of the story in the *XO, Kitty* series. In this scene, Kitty was in a dusty attic, opening old boxes and finding her mother's valuables. These items could have been old photographs, letters, or other objects that held memories of her mother's past.

### **4.3 XO, Kitty Netflix Series as Scenes Verbal Sign**

#### **Handphone Sound**

*“Drrrrtttt Drrrrtttt Drrrrtttt”*

The sound of incoming phone vibrations in the scene of Kitty chatting with Dae via video call at the swimming pool. The incoming phone vibration sound came from the Korean International School of Seoul. The vibration sound was common and frequent, and had a great effect in conveying certain nuances.

*”Tik Tik Tik Tik Tik”*

The sound was a small but significant audio element that conveyed the atmosphere and reinforced the realism and intensity of the moment on screen. The sound of typing on the phone keyboard created an intimate and personal atmosphere, as if we were being invited to go deeper into the story. Each finger tapping on the phone screen not only represented an act of communication but also contained the emotions and messages that Kitty wanted to convey.

*“Dung du du tang teng teng teng”*

The ringing sound of an incoming video call on Kitty's cell phone, with the caller being her father. The conversation was about whether Kitty was doing well after arriving in Korea, as Kitty had just arrived and was lying down on her dormitory bed. The sound of this incoming video call also reinforced the main theme in *XO, Kitty* of the importance of communication, especially in long-distance contexts such as Kitty and her father, who lived in different countries. Video calls became an important tool for conveying messages that could not be conveyed by text or voice alone.

#### **Music Background**

*“Urineun Drop it like HOT HOT HOT”*

The K-pop songs used as background music also represented the personality and energy of each character. Min-Ho's character appeared at the airport with Seventeen's "HOT", with dynamic and catchy beat, reflected Min-Ho's self-confident character and strong charisma.

*”Kick in the door, waving the coco”*

Yuri's character first appeared seen shopping for clothes with her charismatic gaze accompanied by Blackpink's "Pink Venom" with a bold beat that emphasized Yuri's beautiful and

elegant yet mysterious character. The use of Blackpink's song helped build the atmosphere around Yuri's character and hinted at her future role in the story.

*"You know, without you, I'm so lonely. When you're not here, 911 calls. Into your warmth again, I dive. Darling you, darling you, baby."*

The song played during Dae's appearance at the Korean International School of Seoul (KISS) student welcome party, he also met Kitty for the first time. The song played when Dae finally made eye contact with Kitty, and with a look of disbelief, he ran and hugged her. The song's warm and romantic tone reflected Dae and Kitty's relationship and Dae's gentle and caring nature.

### **Camera Shot**

*Cekrek! Cekrek! Cekrek!*

The sound of camera shots played an important role in enhancing the atmosphere and conveying the specific feel of the scene. The sound of the snapshots gave a sense of documenting or capturing the moment, adding a layer of realism that made the scene feel more alive and concrete.

### **Dialogue**

*"So you were the **pen pal**? Dae's American **pen pal**."*

The words spoken by Minho pointed directly to Kitty's role in Dae's life and identified her as an American pen pal. The use of the word "pen pal" and the emphasis on "American" showed that Kitty not only communicated with Dae through letters, but also highlighted the different geographical and cultural backgrounds between them, which became an important element in the story.

*"Katherine Song Covey, Kitty to my friends."*

Adding "Kitty to my friends," Kitty showed how she preferred to be called by people who were closer to her, suggesting a difference in how she positioned herself in different social contexts.

*"I know I can't stop you from telling Kitty that we're in a fake relationship. But she has to keep the secret."*

The statement *"we're in a fake relationship"* described the fake status of the relationship between Yuri and Dae, which was constructed to protect a larger personal secret, namely Yuri's sexual identity and orientation, which she had not openly revealed. Yuri's next line referred to the need to keep this lie from Kitty and implicitly showed the pressure and responsibility Yuri felt to maintain this lie for the sake of privacy.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 XO, Kitty Netflix Series as Poster Visual Sign**

#### **Tagline**

*"FROM JENNY HAN, A NEW TO ALL THE BOYS I'VE LOVED BEFORE STORY BEGINS"*, was a signifier that showed a connection with the previous work. The signified of the tagline was the continuity of the story and the initial introduction to the audience of the themes and narratives that the series might take up.

#### **Series Title**

The title *"XO, Kitty"* functioned as a signifier that conveyed the central theme of the series.

"XO," often interpreted as "hugs and kisses," symbolically conveyed an emotional connection, indicating that the series would focus on romantic relationships or emotional interactions. Indicated that the story might focus on a love story with Kitty as the main character.

### **Series Distributor**

The Netflix logo on the poster served as a signifier indicating the distribution platform of the series. The meaning of this element was the exclusivity of the series on Netflix, emphasizing that viewers could only watch the series on the platform.

### **Release Date**

The release date "May 18" was a signifier that provided concrete information about when the series would be available to viewers. The signified of this information was the release schedule, which allowed viewers to prepare to watch on that date, as well as to build anticipation for the series.

### **Background**

The background on the poster, a cityscape of buildings and streets, provided visual context for the setting of the story. As a signifier, it signified the setting of the story, which was in Seoul, South Korea, emphasizing the urban atmosphere and cultural environment that would be part of the narrative.

### **Character Placement**

The placement of the main character at the front of the poster, just below the title, served as a signifier to identify the central characters in the story. The meaning of this placement was to visually introduce the audience to who would be the focus of the series, as well as to provide an idea of the relationships and interactions between the characters in the story.

## **5.2 XO, Kitty Netflix Series as Trailer Verbal Sign**

The uttered functioned as a signifier that directly connected the feelings of love and fate to the characters in the story. The signifier in this case was the narrator's words and tone, which conveyed a sense of trust and familiarity, while the signified was the concept of true love that had stood the test of time, as seen in the relationship between Lara Jean and Peter in the previous series, *To All the Boys*.

This signifier described an important moment when Kitty discovered a deep connection between herself and her mother's past, especially with the Korean cultural heritage that was part of her identity. The signified in this sign was the broader meaning of identity, family heritage, and the journey of self-discovery.

## **5.3 XO, Kitty Netflix Series as Scenes Verbal Sign**

### **Handphone Sound**

A repetitive sound that mimicked the vibration of an incoming phone and was directly associated with communication. *Drrrrtt Drrrrtt Drrrrtt* sound represented a connection or incoming communication, often creating anticipation.

*'Tik Tik Tik Tik'* was a signifier of the repetitive typing sound of a cell phone keyboard. It signified communication, the act of sending or receiving a message, and created an auditory link to modern methods of communication.

### **Music Background**



The signifier referred to the lyrics of the K-pop song played during the character introduction. The choice of this song indicated a connection with popular culture, especially Korean pop culture, which might have appealed to the younger generation familiar with K-pop. It reflected the lively and energetic atmosphere of the scene, perhaps in line with the emotions or actions of the characters.

### **Camera Shot**

The used of sound effects, such as the camera shot. The signifier was the sound effect itself, which literally indicated the action that was taking place—the taking of the picture and the receiving of the message. But the signified was more than the action itself; these sounds signified surveillance, documentation, and perhaps pressure or intrusion into the personal lives of the characters.

### **Dialogue**

The signifier was the words spoken by Minho that directly referred to Kitty as a pen pal. This dialogue signified the introduction of a relationship or connection between the two characters. It also referred to the concept of long-distance friendship and cultural exchange that the term "pen pal" implied.

Kitty's introduction, used her full name and nickname. The introduction implied identity and intimacy. By giving her full name and then a nickname, Kitty signaled a level of openness and familiarity that made it easier for others to connect with her. It also established her identity in both a formal and informal sense, bridging her cultural background with her personal identity.

The signifier here was the words "fake relationship," which explicitly referred to an inauthentic relationship. But the signified was much richer. It referred to a complicated dynamic between the characters in which the relationship might have been used as a means of manipulation or self-protection from a larger situation.

The sound literally signified a video call, but the signified could have reflected the digital and communicative elements that increasingly dominated the characters' lives. It could also have indicated a pivotal moment in the narrative, where this video call might have had the potential to change the course of the story or reveal important new information. The sound signaled the transition from private to public space, where digital communication acted as a bridge between characters.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

XO, Kitty Netflix series has promotional media such as posters and trailers to promote the series before its premiere. The signs were divided into signifiers and signs as well as verbal signs and visual signs. Posters are visual signs with 6 categories namely tagline, series title, series distributor, release date, background, and also character placement on the poster. The trailer itself is a verbal sign that uses the voice of the narrator. When it's time for the premiere, verbal signs also exist in the scenes of each episode. The suggestion for the study is to ensure that the visual and verbal aspects of promotional materials are more consistent and complementary. Improve the synergy between signifiers and signified in verbal and visual aspects.

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