



VNU Journal of Foreign Studies

Journal homepage: <https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/>



AN ANALYSIS OF THE “HOSPITAL PLAYLIST 2” MOVIE POSTERS: A VISUAL GRAMMAR APPROACH

Pham Thi Hanh*, Le Quynh Chi

Faculty of Linguistics and Cultures of English-Speaking Countries,

VNU University of Languages and International Studies, No.2 Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam

Received 16 July 2024

Revised 11 August 2024; Accepted 28 August 2024

Abstract: In the present digital era, movie posters have gained increased significance; hence, it is crucial to understand the significance of each component in movie posters in effectively communicating the overarching message (Ashari & Rochmawati, 2022). Previous research in this field often focused solely on only one out of the three meanings proposed in the Visual Grammar framework, developed by Kress and van Leeuwen in 1996 or centered around a few movie posters. To address these gaps, this study was conducted to analyze all three meanings proposed in the framework and expand the scope of analysis beyond a single poster in a movie. The researchers identified certain findings about creating effective movie posters via the application of the framework. From the results, it is recommended that visual promotion should be carefully analyzed for better audience engagement.

Keywords: movie poster, Visual Grammar, Hospital Playlist 2

* Corresponding author.

Email address: hanhpt1976@vnu.edu.vn

PHÂN TÍCH ÁP PHÍCH PHIM “HOSPITAL PLAYLIST 2”: PHƯƠNG PHÁP NGŨ PHÁP HÌNH ẢNH

Phạm Thị Hạnh, Lê Quỳnh Chi

*Khoa Ngôn ngữ và Văn hóa các nước nói tiếng Anh, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội,
Số 2 Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam*

Nhận bài ngày 16 tháng 07 năm 2024

Chỉnh sửa ngày 11 tháng 08 năm 2024; Chấp nhận đăng ngày 28 tháng 08 năm 2024

Tóm tắt: Trong thời đại kỹ thuật số hiện nay, áp phích phim ngày càng có ý nghĩa quan trọng, do đó, rất cần phải hiểu tầm quan trọng của từng thành phần trong áp phích phim trong việc truyền đạt thông điệp tổng thể một cách hiệu quả (Ashari & Rochmawati, 2022). Các nghiên cứu trước đây trong lĩnh vực này thường chỉ tập trung vào chỉ một trong ba nghĩa được đề xuất trong khung Ngữ pháp hình ảnh được Kress và van Leeuwen phát triển vào năm 1996 hoặc xoay quanh một vài poster phim. Để giải quyết những vấn đề trên, nghiên cứu này được thực hiện để phân tích cả ba ý nghĩa được đề xuất trong khuôn khổ và mở rộng phạm vi phân tích ra ngoài một áp phích duy nhất trong một bộ phim. Tác giả của nghiên cứu này, thông qua việc phân tích các áp phích của bộ phim “Hospital Playlist 2”, đã có những phát hiện nhất định về việc tạo ra các áp phích phim hiệu quả thông qua việc áp dụng khung lý thuyết trên. Từ kết quả đó, chúng tôi khuyến nghị rằng các chiến lược quảng bá hình ảnh nên được phân tích cẩn thận để thu hút khán giả tốt hơn.

Từ khóa: áp phích quảng cáo phim, Ngữ pháp hình ảnh, Hospital Playlist 2

1. Introduction

In the present digital era, movie posters have gained increased significance as a method of disseminating information, especially through aesthetics and collectability. It has been observed that “there are many other modes of meaning, in any culture, which are outside the realm of language” (Halliday, 1978, p. 4), and that not only text but images also greatly contribute to the understanding of meaning (Kaindl, 2004; Lim Fei, 2007). Consequently, movie posters have predominantly been examined using Visual Grammar, a theoretical framework established by Kress and van Leeuwen in 2006.

The main objective of this study is to analyze the visual elements in the movie posters for “Hospital Playlist 2” using the Visual Grammar framework. Understanding the movie’s messages through the posters is crucial. To accomplish this objective, this research aims to address the following questions:

What messages of the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie are conveyed through movie posters to the audience?

With this study, we make academic and practical contributions to the related fields. First, this research aims to contribute to the field of visual communication studies by examining the proposed framework and identifying the messages communicated through the posters. Second, the study provides an examination of choices made when promotional materials are created for media content, especially movie posters, to improve the efficiency of the efforts and effectively communicate the desired messages of the movie.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Posters as a Distinct Means of Information Transmission, Visual Communication and Advertisement

A poster is a unique method for transmitting information, distinguishing itself from traditional written forms. It is essentially a visual medium that emphasizes the presentation of intricate ideas through the combined use of graphics and concise written text (Vujakovic, 1995). While posters are a unique tool for conveying information, movie posters can act as instruments for visual communication and advertisement as they encompass graphic images, color schemes, and other minor elements, and it is crucial to understand the roles of these elements in capturing audiences (Chen & Gao, 2013; Wang, 2019). Besides, by condensing the essence of the film into a visually appealing image, movie posters can effectively capture the attention of potential viewers and anticipate the film's release. In other words, movie posters seek to inform customers about a product and drive sales through effective strategies (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Visual Grammar is one of the approaches that could help understand the way posters of movies do this job.

2.2. Visual Grammar

The Visual Grammar framework, starting with Halliday's (1978) idea of the three main functions of language in Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL), was developed by Kress and van Leeuwen in 1996 and expanded later in 2006.

2.2.1. Representational Meaning

"Representational meaning" addresses the depiction of objects and their relationships in a certain cultural context, including internal connections between represented participants, objects, actions, and settings, and it can be categorized into "narrative process," "conceptual process," and "circumstances."

In the "narrative process," three key sub-processes are identified. First sub-process, the "action process", refers to the depiction of dynamic physical actions or events in an image. Second, the "reaction process" refers to the formation of vectors by the participants' eye lines, where the "reactor" is the one looking while the "phenomenon" is what they are looking at, and it relates to the responses or emotional reactions of the character. Lastly, the "mental process" refers to dialogue balloons that specify thoughts or speech of characters. In the "conceptual process," three key sub-processes are identified. First process is the "classification process," which is about how things in an image are arranged to suggest a type or class they belong to; in this sub-process, "covert taxonomy" refers to when the superordinate is not shown directly in the image but may be implied between the subordinates, while "overt taxonomy" refers to when the superordinate is direct in the image, usually in the form of a diagram or tree structure. The second is the "analytical process" indicating a part-whole structure in which the "carrier" represents the whole, while "possessive attributes" represent the parts, illustrative of how various components contribute to the subject matter's structure. Last, in the "symbolic process," the "carrier" denotes the represented participant, and the "attribute" refers to what signifies the meaning or identity, as it is the use of symbols to represent ideas that carry meaning beyond their literal existence.

The final process, "circumstances", provides context without direct vector connections to the main subjects, including circumstances of setting, indicating time and place; circumstances of means, illustrating how an event occurs; or circumstances of accompaniment,

showing who or what is present alongside the main subjects.

2.2.2. Interactive Meaning

The “interactive meaning” pertains to the relationships in society between participants and viewers. It includes four elements, namely “contact,” “social distance,” “perspective,” and “modality.” “Contact” is established through the presence of gaze, which is classified into “offer” (participants looking away from viewers, providing a sense of intimacy among participants) and “demand” (participants directly looking at viewers, creating a connection between them). Secondly, “social distance” is conveyed through choices regarding the size of the frame, which ranges from close-ups (showing intimacy) to long shots (indicating distance). Third, the angle of the camera is an important part of showing whether a scene is subjective or objective. Also, the horizontal perspective shows equal relationships and interactions that happen in an equal position by putting subjects or objects at the same level of the poster, while the vertical perspective shows hierarchy and status by putting characters at different heights in the poster. Finally, “modality” involves the examination of modality markers. Low modality is characterized by extreme abstraction, resulting in a simplified abstract representation with a significant reduction in depth, detail, background, and color. By contrast, high modality represents the utmost degree of these modality markers, enhancing the three-dimensionality of visuals.

2.2.3. Compositional Meaning

“Compositional meaning” acts as a link connecting the “representational meaning” and the “interactive meaning,” resulting in a cohesive and significant entirety in visual communication. The analysis of “compositional meaning” involves the examination of three elements: “information value,” “salience,” and “framing.” First, “information value” is divided into three types of placement: (1) horizontal placement considers elements placed on the left side of the image to be the “given,” representing what viewers already know, while elements on the right are seen as the “new,” conveying information that viewers may not yet be aware of; (2) vertical placement divides the poster along the vertical axis, suggesting contrast or opposition between the upper (considered “ideal,” presents idealized and generalized information) and lower sections of the image (regarded as the “real,” provides more specific and practical details); and (3) center-margin placement considers the central area of the image as the most crucial section. Secondly, “salience” relates to the hierarchy of importance among the elements in the image and how they are presented to capture the viewer’s attention, including foreground or background placement and size variation. Finally, “framing” refers to the inclusion of framing lines in a poster, which can either separate or connect elements. These lines typically indicate a sense of separation or independence among the elements in the composition.

2.3. Review of Related Studies into Movie Posters Adopting Visual Grammar

There have been numerous studies on posters adopting Visual Grammar (Chen & Gao, 2014; Hu, 2019; Moya & Pinar, 2008; Nguyen, 2021). Different studies apply the framework differently in terms of the types of meanings. For example, regarding a study solely examining the “representational meaning” of movie posters, Chen and Gao (2014) chose seven movie posters with the primary aim of illustrating how semiotic tools are utilized in the visual designs of these posters to convey different dimensions of “representational meaning.” By looking at how different visual elements interact with each other, the study showed how important it is to tell the difference between “narrative processes” and “conceptual processes” through seven

movie posters that were all different. Each poster showed a different aspect of “narrative processes” and “conceptual processes” with a different message. Therefore, it could be seen that accurately interpreting the “representational meaning” is crucial for predicting the movie’s storyline appropriately and understanding the central theme and message of the film.

In terms of a study that concentrated solely on the “interactive meaning” of the framework, Hu’s research in 2019 concentrated on the “interactive meaning” of a particular movie poster. It explored how various symbols, including images and color, work collaboratively to establish an interactive relationship with the audience and effectively convey the movie’s underlying meaning. From the analysis, it appeared that the selected symbols, such as images and colors, share a reciprocal relationship, reinforcing each other’s impact. The images, carefully positioned at the center, elicited a strong visual impact on viewers. The chosen contrasting color palette of black and bronze not only aligned with the protagonist’s image but also carried a profound and dignified symbolism that resonates with the theme of the movie. This intricate coordination of symbols resulted in a poster that encapsulated the film’s thematic essence: love and war.

As for studies that analyzed all three meanings of the Visual Grammar framework, Moya and Pinar (2008) employed a multimodal analysis of a picture book with a view to examining how visual and verbal components together create meaning. The analysis of the visual meaning shows that there is a predominance of narrative patterns. From an interpersonal perspective, “gazes are typically the kind of offer utilized, and there is a predominance of long shots, which tend to imply objectivity and distance” (p. 1601). They found that the images are presented from a medium angle, creating involvement on the part of the viewer. Nguyen (2021) analyzed official posters from American romantic comedy movies. The focus was on uncovering patterns in the use of semiotic elements to create meaning within the specific genre of romantic comedy. For “representational meaning,” the key finding was the distinction between relationship-oriented and character-oriented posters. Relationship-oriented posters usually featured a couple, and the main focus was on their romantic connection. In contrast, character-oriented posters highlighted individual characters’ features and personalities, creating ambiguity about the genre. In the “interactive meaning,” the “demand” gaze, where participants engage with the viewers, was commonly used to establish interaction, while the size of the frame, often medium shots or medium long shots, aimed to strike a balance between conveying emotions and maintaining viewer detachment. With regard to “compositional meaning,” “framing” focused on harmonizing the ideal and real pattern, where the upper part typically visualized the promise or ideal, while the lower part provided factual details (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Our review reveals that first, for the research that focused solely on one out of the three meanings proposed in the Visual Grammar framework, while providing certain insights into the visual communication of movie posters, it did not cover the remaining meanings mentioned in the framework, which could be equally important in understanding the complete semiotic structure of movie posters. Second, as for some studies that centered around only one movie poster in its analysis, these studies did not successfully explore the diversity of visual communication strategies employed within different movie posters in one movie or across different movies. As a result, this could limit the research’s significance, as the findings may not be comprehensive enough for designers and visual creators to implement. Third, as Korean culture is becoming more universally popular, there has been little research on how posters in Korean movies contribute to the resounding success of the movies.

In conclusion, the identified research gaps suggest opportunities for another study to analyze all three meanings of the Visual Grammar framework and expand the scope of analysis beyond a single poster in a movie. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how visual elements are consistently employed across various posters.

3. Methodology

3.1. Subject of the Study

Six out of 16 posters, three released before and three after the movie broadcast, were randomly chosen from “Hospital Playlist 2”, a South Korean television movie released in 2021, set in the fictional Yulje Medical Center and centered on 5 doctors: Yang Seok-Hyeong, Ahn Jeong-Won, Lee Ik-Jun, Chae Song-Hwa, and Kim Jun-wan. The reason for this selection of an equal number of posters released before and after the broadcast was to ensure an unbiased analysis.

As for the movie choice, “Hospital Playlist 2” is distinct from other medical dramas because of its slice-of-life approach. The researcher selected this movie for analysis due to its significance following its broadcast. To illustrate, after broadcasting the 17th episode, the movie received a rating of 14.1%, which far exceeded the average rating for movies in the year 2021 (11.6%) (Lee, 2021), according to Nielsen Korea. Besides, the movie was nominated and eventually won a number of awards, including the Baeksang Art Awards and the Asia Artist Awards, as reported by IMDb in 2020, one of the most highly regarded award ceremonies in the industry.

3.2. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The six posters from the movie “Hospital Playlist 2” were collected from the tvN official website, a South Korean cable channel specializing in media content production, and could be accessed through the link: <https://tvn.cjenm.com/ko/doctorlife2/photo1/>. The visual elements in the six posters from the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie were analyzed using Visual Grammar. The steps consisted of describing the movie posters according to the meanings of the Visual Grammar framework and suggesting the underlying messages conveyed through the posters using the principles given in the framework.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Representational Meaning

Table 1

Summary of Findings on Representational Meaning

Representational Meaning							
		Poster 1	Poster 2	Poster 3	Poster 4	Poster 5	Poster 6
Narrative process	Action process						
	Reaction process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Mental process						
Conceptual process	Classification process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Analytical process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Symbolic process	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

4.1.1. Narrative Process

Both the “action process” and “mental process” are absent from the posters. Notably, the “reaction process” relating to the responses or emotional reactions of characters appeared in all the posters of the movie. Specifically, the main characters, or “reactors,” all display positive emotional expressions, yet the way they express positivity varies from one poster to another. For example, the characters exhibit a sense of positivity, camaraderie, and comfort, evident through their smiles and casual poses (1, 4). Instead of interacting with external objects, their deep connection with one another reveals a shared understanding or mutual support, a characteristic of the collaborative nature of healthcare teams facing the rigors of hospital work. The joyful and optimistic depictions highlight another aspect relevant to healthcare professionals: the achievement and satisfaction derived from overcoming challenges; the confidence and hopeful outlook of the characters, as they stand with hands in pockets or crossed arms, mirror the sense of accomplishment that healthcare workers may feel after a successful diagnosis or treatment (3, 6). The seriousness and assertiveness of posing without smiling, akin to the conventional representation of a rock band in poster 5, however, do not necessarily convey negativity or pessimism. The absence of smiles aligns with the typical image associated with rock bands, and their deliberate decision to refrain from smiling may be attributed to the possession of photographs. The characters appear to be making an effort to blend in with the music performance’s atmosphere, implying that they are at ease and find joy and happiness in listening to music. Finally, multiple scenes utilized in poster 2 with “reactors” exhibit an overall positive reaction with the “reactors” engaged with one another and their surroundings, ranging from the hospital hallway or its garden to the music studio or an open-air space, encompassing activities from work to leisure, weaving a variety of interrelated experiences throughout the image. Collectively, these posters leverage the reaction process to portray a wide range of human positive emotions and experiences, crafting narratives that draw viewers to interpret and feel the characters’ different positivity states in the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie. Indeed, the typical portrayal of doctors in the media often includes dynamic, action-oriented scenes, such as performing surgery, responding to medical emergencies, and having critical patient interactions (Chory-Assad & Tamborini, 2001; Turow, 1996). These conventional representations usually show doctors in the high-stakes environment of operating rooms, dressed in surgical attire, or actively engaging with patients during examinations, illustrating their professional responsibilities and medical expertise (Turow, 1996). However, the six analyzed posters in the movie “Hospital Playlist 2” present characters in a manner that differs from these standard depictions. For the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie posters, their atypical representations in the promotional materials could possibly play a vital role in impacting the audience’s perception by humanizing the doctors; they are depicted as multi-dimensional

people whose lives extend beyond their clinical roles. This portrayal is likely to foster a sense of relatability, inviting viewers to see the characters as individuals with personal interests and relationships both inside and outside the hospital setting. By not making use of the typical images of doctors immersed in medical procedures and emergencies, the six movie posters could capture the audience's interest and curiosity about the unique narrative of this medical movie.

4.1.2. Conceptual process

Classification process

As one of the sub-processes of the “conceptual process,” the “classification process” pertains to how elements within an image are organized to suggest a type or class to which they belong. It demonstrates a “covert taxonomy” used in the posters to organize and categorize the characters, meaning that the superordinate is not explicitly shown in the image; for example, all characters are portrayed with a certain feature, such as clothes, to recognize whether they are doctors or not in this movie. Despite its consistent application across all posters of the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie, the context that frames these groupings varies. While the characters are clustered based on their professional identities as doctors as demonstrated by their hospital attire (2, 3, 6), their classification as close friends is also highlighted (1, 4, 5).

Analytical process

The “analytical process” dissects how “possessive attributes” of individual elements enrich the composition or overarching theme represented by the “carrier”. A commonality among all the studied posters is their use of each main character of the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie as the “possessive attributes,” which are the parts of a poster used to represent the whole context or meaning of the poster and the movie. The unique expressions, postures, and perceived roles of individual characters distinguish them and contribute to the overall themes of companionship in both professional and personal settings in this movie.

More specifically, the character representations across all six posters of the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie highlight both the individuality and balanced significance of each member within the group. To start with, Chae Song-hwa and Yang Seok-hyeong present a more tranquil front, with their calm expressions, light-colored attire, and practical hairstyles conveying an air of simplicity and composure. It aligns with their images of stability and meticulous care within the narrative. Song-hwa's refined presence is accentuated by her glasses, underscoring her thoughtful and methodical approach to both surgery and life. Similarly, Seok-hyeong's understated appearance reflects his gentle and empathetic personality. In contrast, Kim Jun-wan's portrayal leans toward the archetype of a composed professional. His sharp, sophisticated styling, complete with glasses and tailored clothes, mirrors his serious, no-nonsense approach to his duties as a surgeon. His polished hairstyle further enhances this aura of proficiency and authority. These visual cues across the six analyzed posters collectively underscored the equal importance of each character's role in the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie. The uniform positioning of the characters, with none dominating the visual space over the others, reinforces the narrative's emphasis on equal importance. Lastly, Lee Ik-jun and Ahn Jeong-won exude approachability, their warm smiles, and neatly groomed appearances, signaling friendly and confident personalities. This relaxed demeanor dovetails with the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie's portrayal of charismatic and compassionate qualities

Symbolic process

This process appears in five out of six posters except for poster 2. It is observed that

Contact	Offer	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Demand					✓	✓
	Social distance						
	Close-up						
	Medium			✓	✓	✓	✓
	Medium-long	✓	✓				
	Long						
Perspective	Horizontal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Vertical						
Modality	Depth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Detail	✓	✓			✓	
	Contextualization	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Color	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Illumination	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.2.1. Contact

Posters 1 to 4 present what is termed “offer” contact, where the main characters do not engage in direct eye contact with the viewer. This encourages spectator-like engagement, invites viewers to become observers, and interprets the scenes at their own pace, creating a narrative distance that allows for thoughtful consideration of this movie’s themes. Conversely, posters 5 and 6 switch to a “demand” contact, as the characters look directly at the audience, creating direct engagement. This shift commands the viewer’s attention and intensifies the connection with the characters, essentially “demanding” an emotional or cognitive response that might lead to watching the movie or exploring its content further.

The combination of “offer” and “demand” contacts across the six studied posters is not just a design choice to attract audiences to watch the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie, but a reflection of a larger pattern in Korean cinema, where combining both approaches serves to engage viewers at different levels. The viewer forms a diverse relationship with the narrative by alternating between the perspectives of an outsider and direct address (Nurudeen et al., 2021). The strategic blend of these two contact modes within the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie posters perhaps aims to strike a balance, cultivating a personal connection between the viewers and the five doctors while preserving the space for personal interpretation. By doing so, these six posters capitalize on the emotional pull of direct engagement and the introspective allure of being a detached observer, ensuring that every potential viewer, regardless of their preference for involvement, finds a point of entry into the movie’s world.

4.2.2. Social Distance

The concept of “social distance,” conveyed through the size of the frame to show either intimacy or distance, remains relatively similar across the six movie posters. The first two posters utilize medium-to-long shots that present the characters in their work environment. This choice creates a comprehensive view of the hospital world, providing context to the daily lives of medical professionals. Posters 3 to 6 spotlight medium shots that bring the audience closer to the characters, fostering an intimate connection with their personal experience. These shots draw viewers into moments that might ordinarily go unseen, depicting the team’s quieter and more personal interactions.

4.2.3. Perspective

The aspect of “perspective,” which conveys the subjectivity or objectivity of a scene through the camera angle, is consistently employed in the horizontal perspective across all examined posters. This perspective evokes equality, teamwork, and camaraderie within the medical setting. Notably, all characters are depicted at the same level, devoid of any hierarchical positioning, thus signaling the narrative’s emphasis on the equitable value of each character’s contributions. In addition, the horizontal perspective across movie posters not only aligns with Kress and van Leeuwen’s concept of conveying equality and teamwork but also underscores the narrative’s core principles of inclusivity and mutual respect as by positioning all characters on an equal position. The posters accentuate the collective essence of the storyline, wherein every character assumes a pivotal role, irrespective of their individual backgrounds, expertise, or roles within the medical profession. This portrayal resonates with the real-life dynamics of medical practitioners, where collaborative endeavors and mutual regard are indispensable for delivering exemplary patient care and advancing medical science.

4.2.4. Modality

All types of modality are used in all the posters, except for the absence of detail in posters 3 and 4. High modality that features realistic portrayals that ranges from capturing the ambience of a rainy day to the vibrancy of a medical team engaged in musical expression (1, 2, 5). Poster 1, for instance, evokes a palpable sense of atmosphere with a rainy motif, affecting how the audience perceives the characters’ medical reality. Poster 2 provides a rich, visual narrative through a montage of scenes that construct a multifaceted medical setting, while poster 5 presents to the viewers the harmony of a band consisting of medical characteristics.

Posters 3, 4, and 6, while opting for simpler compositions, maintain compelling realism. First, posters 3 and 6 present the doctors in the foreground against a simple and serene sky in the background, symbolically wrapping up the day’s trials with hope, and in doing so, manage to suggest untold stories of resilience and optimism. Additionally, poster 4 portrays the setting inside a car with a sharpness that invites viewers into a journey or mobility among the characters, despite its simplicity.

The medical movie, including the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie, relates much to real-life situations, in contrast to the fantastical elements of the fantasy and science fiction genres. In the context of fantasy and sci-fi genres, “modality” operates differently from genres that depict more realistic narratives, like medical movies. The “modality” in fantasy and sci-fi is less about realistic representation and more about the creation of convincing alternate realities (Barnes, 2015; Dittmer, 2010). For this purpose, imagery often includes magical elements, mythical creatures, and enchanted landscapes. In contrast, medical movies should invoke vibrant colors, detailed textures, and elaborate designs that differentiate the fantasy world from the mundane

reality. Indeed, the “Hospital Playlist 2” posters bring more authenticity to viewers. The dedication to portraying medical narratives with high “modality,” or, in other words, realistic elements, allows for an engaging experience that resonates on a personal level with viewers, as they recognize and empathize with the genuine experiences of medical professionals.

4.3. Compositional Meaning

Table 3

Summary of Findings on Compositional Meaning

Compositional meaning						
Information value	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Saliency	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Framing		✓				

4.3.1. Information Value

“Information value” is about the arrangement of elements in the posters that is intentionally crafted in order to convey distinct messages and themes. All six movie posters demonstrate a reduced focus on left-right disparities, with the main characters positioned horizontally, standing next to each other, and without any characters consistently standing at the far left or right. Therefore, it can be inferred that this movie does not intentionally use the left-right distinctions to convey any message. Rather, we observed a deliberate use of top-bottom distinctions and center-margin focus.

Significant top-bottom distinctions to effectively structure their compositions are employed (1, 3). Poster 1 features a prominent upper segment where the movie’s title, broadcast time, and detailed hospital environment, which can be seen as the “ideal,” serving to set the scene, situate the narrative, and remind viewers of the medical context amidst more casual imagery of the characters who are situated outside in everyday clothing. Meanwhile, the lower segment of poster 1 offers a glimpse into the “real,” presenting a different depiction of the characters engaged in a moment of leisure-standing in the rain with expressions of positivity. Similarly, the high-reaching sky in poster 3 occupies the top region, perhaps alluding to aspirations or escape. Below, the characters are positioned against the sky backdrop, capturing their professions’ daily realities. The serene, hopeful sky contrasts with the grounded reality of doctors’ experiences.

A clear center-margin distinction is also used to structure their composition (2, 4, 5). Poster 2 is divided into multiple panels, each portraying a unique scene. The central panel is the most prominent, with the main characters in medical attire signaling it as the main plot of the story, while the surrounding panels enrich this narrative with additional context and subplots, which helps to provide a more comprehensive glimpse into the narrative that awaits viewers. On the one hand, the central panel of the characters with medical attire stands as the focal point, representing the main storyline; on the other hand, the surrounding panels play a pivotal role in offering additional layers of context that serve to enhance the viewers’ understanding and interests in the characters, their professional roles as doctors, and their personal lives. Furthermore, posters 4, 5, and 6 adhere to a similar characterization pattern,

centering the main cast with minimal margins to emphasize the collective.

As can be seen from the findings, the central-margin positioning is mainly adopted, which helps to underscore the narrative of unity better as none of the characters is shown to have greater importance than others. Indeed, all of them stand in one line equally.

4.3.2. Saliency

The analysis of “saliency,” the hierarchy of importance among the elements and how they are presented to capture viewers’ attention across these posters, reveals that, with the exception of poster 2, the characters consistently emerge as the most prominent features. Poster 1 shows the similarity in size and substantial occupancy of the poster space among the characters positions them as the dominant element. While the contrast between them and the background is modest, their distinct facial expressions are engaging. The muted color scheme is punctuated by the characters’ warm-toned clothing, offering a subtle distinction from the cooler, rainy environment. Their central placement and foreground positioning uniformly emphasize their collective importance, anchoring them as the core focus of posters. Posters 3 to 6 also resonate with this theme, presenting characters that are both large and proportionally sized. The use of a simple backdrop, like the clear sky in the two aforementioned posters or the monochromatic wall in poster 5, counterbalances the minimal contrast between the foreground and background, making the characters stand out. The soft and light colors add understated prominence. Diverging from this pattern, poster 2 alone utilizes a different approach to highlight its characters, with the central image featuring the characters in blue medical attire standing out as the most predominant image because of its larger size and central position on the poster. The warm tones in this central image draw a stark contrast to the cooler tones featured in the surrounding pictures. Despite this central prominence, the adjacent images are comparable in sharpness and framing, which might suggest a deliberate balance in visual weight.

4.3.3. Framing

Lastly, it is notable that poster 2 stands alone in its application of this technique, with evident frames separating various scenes, which likely correspond to different subplots within the movie, for example, their professional roles inside the hospital and their personal lives with music and journeys. In contrast, the other posters do not display explicit framing but situate the characters in a shared space. This absence of division suggests a seamless, continuous narrative thread, emphasizing the characters’ unified journey or collective experience when working in the hospital and also when enjoying their personal lives together. This stylistic choice reinforces the overarching theme of unity as it plays out across the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie’s progression.

In summary, the six examined posters from the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie collectively convey a rich, multi-dimensional narrative that highlights themes of personal and professional life, resilience, friendship, and shared experiences, using a sophisticated blend of “representational,” “interactive,” and “compositional meanings.”

As for the “representational meaning,” the absence of the “action process” and “mental process” across all six posters suggests a focus on the broader narrative and thematic elements of resilience, friendship, and shared experiences, inviting interpretative engagement from the viewers. Moreover, regarding the “reaction process,” each poster portrays the characters’ positive reactions to different degrees, creating a narrative of resilience, hope, camaraderie, and shared experiences. Additionally, all characters can be grouped based on both their professional

roles or personal relationships, highlighting their dual roles in the narrative. Finally, the movie conveys themes of adversity, rebellion, hope, and mobility through symbols such as rain, umbrellas, cars, leather jackets, and the clear sky.

Regarding the “interactive meaning,” the use of both “offer” and “demand” contact in different posters controls the viewer’s engagement level, either as an observer or as an active participant in the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie. Furthermore, the medium-to-long shots utilized across the examined movie posters suggest a balance between intimacy and a broader narrative aspect, emphasizing the collective journey. Additionally, the horizontal “perspective” in all posters indicates equality, teamwork, and camaraderie among the characters, and high “modality” is portrayed through realistic depictions.

Lastly, in terms of the “compositional meaning,” the arrangement of elements varies across the “Hospital Playlist 2” movie posters, with some emphasizing the “ideal” and “real” aspects, while others focus on the central role of the characters. Next, the characters are consistently the most salient elements, drawing attention to their emotions and relationships, except in poster 2, where multiple elements share similar “salience.” The unique “framing” in poster 2 suggests multiple subplots, while the absence of framing in others emphasizes a unified narrative experience.

All in all, the study’s results align with other research’s results and it contributed to the field of analyzing movie posters by using the Visual Grammar framework, potentially assisting movie directors, designers and producers in creating movie posters.

5. Conclusion

The analysis holds significance for visual communication, marketing strategies, and film promotion. The study contributes to the field of visual communication by demonstrating how different visual elements work together to convey complex messages of the movie through movie posters, especially those with high viewership ratings. This study, with its narrow scope, examined only six of the available sixteen movie posters from “Hospital Playlist 2.” This selection could restrict the overall applicability of the conclusions and might not reflect the full spectrum of design approaches in movie promotions. Future studies could consider analyzing movie posters from various genres to validate and compare the findings of this study. Also, comparing the visual elements of movie posters across different cultures, languages, and film industries could offer more insights.

References

- AsianWiki. (n.d.). *Hospital playlist*. https://asianwiki.com/Hospital_Playlist
- Barnes, J. L. (2015). Fanfiction as imaginary play: What fan-written stories can tell us about the cognitive science of fiction. *Poetics*, 48, 69–82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2014.12.004>
- Chen, Y., & Gao, X. (2013). Interpretation of Movie Posters from the Perspective of Multimodal Discourse Analysis. *GSTF Journal on Education*, 1(1). https://doi.org/10.5176/2345-7163_1.1.11
- Chen, Y., & Gao, X. (2014). Interpretation of the Representational Meaning of Movie Posters from the Perspective of Multimodal Discourse Analysis. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icelaic-14.2014.87>
- Chory-Assad, R. M., & Tamborini, R. (2001). Television Doctors: An analysis of physicians in Fictional and Non-Fictional Television programs. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 45(3), 499–521. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4503_8

- Dittmer, J. (2010). Comic book visualities: a methodological manifesto on geography, montage and narration. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 35(2), 222–236. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2009.00376.x>
- Halliday, M. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: the social interpretation of language and meaning*. Edward Arnold.
- Holt, T. (2009). *Nothing but blue skies*. Hachette UK.
- Hosseini, K. (2011). *The Kite Runner: Rejacketed*. A&C Black.
- HOLR Magazine. (2023, March 25). *How does a leather jacket reflect your personality?* <https://holrmagazine.com/how-does-a-leather-jacket-reflect-your-personality/>
- Hospital Playlist 2 – Photo Album (n.d.). <https://tvn.cjenm.com/ko/doctorlife2/photo1/>
- Hospital Playlist 2 – On-site Photos (n.d.). <http://tvn.cjenm.com/ko/doctorlife2/photo/?5090=removeCacheYn%3DY%26pageNum%3D1>
- Hu, H. (2019). A study on Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Movie Posters. In *2018 8th International Conference on Education, Management, Computer and Society*. https://webofproceedings.org/proceedings_series/ESSP/EMCS 2018/EMCS15116.pdf
- IMDB. (n.d). *Hospital Playlist (TV Series 2020–2021) - Awards - IMDB*. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11769304/awards/>
- IMP Awards. (n.d.). *Catch Me If You Can movie poster (#1 of 2)*. http://www.impawards.com/2002/catch_me_if_you_can.html
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2012). *Marketing Management* (14th Edition). Pearson Education.
- Kress, G. R., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. Psychology Press.
- Lee, J. (2021, September 17). ‘Wise Doctor Life 2’, where the teamwork of the cast shined, ended with 14.1%. Yonhap News. <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20210915162700005>
- Moya, J., & Pinar, M.J. (2008). Compositional, interpersonal and representational meanings in a children’s narrative: A multimodal discourse analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40, 1601–1619. <http://doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2008.04.019>
- Nguyen, T. T. L. (2021). A multimodal discourse analysis of romantic comedy movie posters. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 37(3), 79-93. <https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4647>
- Nurudeen, M. A., Ogungbe, E. O., & Zakariyah, M. (2021). A socio Semiotic approach to multimodal discourse of selected Nollywood film advertisement posters. *Studies in Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis*, 2(2), 31-45. <https://doi.org/10.48185/spda.v2i2.364>
- Turow, J. (1996). Television entertainment and the US health-care debate. *The Lancet*, 347(9010), 1240-1243. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(96\)90747-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(96)90747-3)
- Vujakovic, P. (1995). Making posters. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 19(2), 251–256. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098269508709313>
- Wang, L. (2019). The art of font design in movie posters. In *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Art Studies: Science, Experience, Education (ICASSEE 2019)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icassee-19.2019.87>
- Wilson, C. P. (1967). Symbolism of the Umbrella. *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 36(1), 83-84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21674086.1967.11926416>

Appendices

Poster 1



Poster 2



Poster 3



Poster 4



Poster 5



Poster 6



Source: tvN official website (Hospital Playlist 2 – On-site Photos, n.d.)