

## A Multimodal Discourse Analysis on Female Representations in Film Posters

Ana Louella N. Navarro<sup>1✉</sup>, Teresita Q. Adriano<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Graduate School, University of Immaculate Conception, Davao City, Philippines

<sup>1</sup> College of Arts and Sciences Education, Davao City, Philippines

<sup>2</sup> Graduate School, University of Immaculate Conception, Davao City, Philippines

✉ email: [annavarro@umindanao.edu.ph](mailto:annavarro@umindanao.edu.ph)

### Received:

May 28, 2024

### Revised:

June 24, 2024

### Accepted:

June 25, 2024

### Published:

August 1, 2024

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the multimodal features used in film posters of Filipino movies produced between 2010 and 2023 that are currently found on Netflix. It aims to highlight the various stereotypes of women depicted through various multimodal modes using Multimodal Discourse Analysis and anchored on Visual Grammar by Kress and Van Leeuwen and Systemic Functional Linguistics by Halliday. Moreover, through this study, the researcher examined how these representations affected female viewers' construction of their feminine images and their overall impression on the film posters. There were 40 film posters analyzed and 11 female participants interviewed. The results revealed that the interactional (gaze, size of frame, and perspective), compositional meanings (salience and informational value) of the film posters were tools to display different female representations. Also, the representational meanings made up by vectors and different structures and process underscored different female representations. These representations were also observed in the themes that were developed from the responses of the participants, which include: women's stereotypical image portrayal, progressive female characters, stereotype subversion, and objectification. Finally, the participants also had similar opinions regarding the influence that film posters have on them when choosing which movies to watch, and the most prominent visual elements that attract the viewers.

**Keywords:** *applied linguistics; education; female representation; film posters; media; multimodal; online streaming sites; visual grammar, philippines*

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### INTRODUCTION

Media has long influenced societal perceptions and gender norms through its representation of women. Gill (2007; cited in Matos, 2016) describes female representation in media as the depiction and characterization of women, often highlighting their sexuality and emotions or focusing on their relationships with children and romantic partners. Fong (2019) asserts that such portrayals help viewers understand the world and themselves. In fact, film posters are a significant medium for disseminating notions about women.

Various studies have analyzed women's representation in visual media with consistent findings. In the United States, Aley and Hahn (2020) found that gender power dynamics in children's animated movie posters still reflect the inferiority of women, as observed in Goffman's study from 40 years ago. Jha (2020) critiqued Bollywood film posters, revealing women as sexual objects, dependent, powerless, and vulnerable. Pawitan and Fetrianggi (2021) concluded that Indonesian film posters commodify women, presenting them as attractive based on global beauty standards but not realistically. In the Philippines, Prieler and Centeno (2013) found that

advertisements perpetuate stereotypes by showing men working in offices while women are depicted doing housework and wearing suggestive clothing. Locally, in Davao City, Saniel (2018) explored femininity issues among local women, uncovering themes of modesty, empowerment, shifting femininity paradigms, and the influence of social media.

Despite these studies, there is a lack of research on women's representation in Filipino film posters. To address this gap, the current study uses Multimodal Discourse Analysis to examine female representation in Filipino movie posters on Netflix.

### ***Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)***

Kress (2009) argued that images have existed longer than text and have gained increasing academic interest over the years. Zhang (2017) highlighted that images are a crucial semiotic mode capable of expressing a wide range of meanings. Ledin and Machin (2020) elaborated that various modes, alongside visual elements, communicate complex information. Traditionally, scholars relied on linguistic modes to interpret texts, but technological advancements have led to incorporating multiple modes to convey meaning, leading to the emergence of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA).

Kress (2011) stated that MDA aims to develop tools for a deeper understanding of the connections between community meanings and their semiotic expressions. MDA examines how different modes effectively convey discourses in context, emphasizing that language is just one of many tools for representation and meaning making. Consequently, meanings derived solely from linguistic-focused Discourse Analysis are considered limited. Recognizing the significance of images, Kress and van Leeuwen introduced Visual Grammar to shift away from traditional discourse analysis that focuses only on linguistic elements. According to Ping (2018), Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) described multimodality as using different elements in semiotic systems: visual (details, background, color, light, and tone), linguistic (language used), aural (sound elements), gestural (facial expressions, gestures, and movement), and spatial (composition and layout).

Visual Grammar sees language as a combination of different semiotic systems, thus making the texts more meaningful.

*Representational Meaning.* Gunther and van Leeuwen (2001; cited in du Gay et al., 2013) defined Representational as the 'reproduction of the objective world of people, human activities, places and even the inner world of people'. Chen and Gao (2014) and Peng (2022) explained that Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar framework stipulates that representational meaning of an image can be expressed in two modes: narrative and conceptual. Yin and Hassan (2021) stated that narrative representation is the social action performed by the actors in an image. Meanwhile, conceptual meaning includes classification, analytical, and symbolic processes.

*Interactive Meaning.* According to Kress and van Leeuwen, as cited by Zhang (2017), interactive meaning is the connection between the image maker, the image and the readers pointing to the interpersonal meaning that exists between the producer and the viewer influenced by the social relationship they share. Moreover, four elements are required to complete the interactive meaning: contact, social distance, attitude and modality.

*Compositional Meaning.* According to Peng (2022), this primarily encompasses information value, viewfinder, and significance. Machin (2007) expounded that the three systems produce a kind of compositional balance based on placement, weight,

and connections such that changing the positioning and grouping of elements can change the composition's entire meaning.

According to Du Gay et al. (2013), meanings play a crucial role in our understanding of the world, aiding us in categorizing it in meaningful ways and making sense of various things and events. This includes situations depicted in films and novels, as well as those found in dreams, fantasies, and real-world objects, even if we have not encountered them in our actual experiences. Using the abovementioned different meanings, the texts' messages could be more understood.

The purpose of the study is to identify the multimodal features used in film posters of Filipino movies produced from between 2010 and 2023 and are currently found in Netflix. Furthermore, it aims to highlight the various stereotypes of women depicted through various multimodal modes using Multimodal Discourse Analysis and anchored on Visual Grammar by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). Moreover, through this study, the researcher intends to examine how these representations affect female viewers' construction of their feminine images and their overall impression.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the multimodal features evident in film posters?
2. What female representations are highlighted by the multimodal properties?
3. How do these representations shape the construction of feminine images?
4. What is the overall impression created by the film posters on different categories of viewers?

### **METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative approach using multimodal discourse analysis. Creswell (2018) describes qualitative research as a systematic empirical inquiry into meaning, making it suitable for interpretative studies. Qualitative methods are versatile, incorporating various recognized frameworks and focusing on understanding how individuals interpret their experiences and assign significance to their encounters.

The study will use Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) to analyze film posters. Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran (2016) explain that SF-MDA aims to understand how meaning systems are organized and used to fulfill social functions. These systems are viewed as social semiotic resources, organized as interrelated networks of meaning options, with 'text' being both a process and product of these selections.












Triangulation will also be employed, as defined by Whittenton (2021), using multiple data sources or approaches to enhance the study's credibility and provide comprehensive results. The study will analyze 40 Filipino film posters from Netflix, including high and low-rated movies from the past ten years and various genres to offer a broader perspective. Interviews with 11 participants will be conducted, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018), where 10 to 50 participants are sufficient depending on the research type. Purposive sampling, recommended by Subedi (2021) and Acharya, et al. (2013), will be used to select participants with the necessary qualities for the study, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.














To ensure transferability, the study will provide a thick description of the situation and fully describe data collection methods. While qualitative studies may not be replicable, detailed descriptions help determine the applicability of findings outside the study's context.




## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION





In analyzing the movie poster's multimodal feature, the Interactional Meaning and Compositional Meaning from Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar were used. In Interactional meaning, three elements were selected: gaze, social distance, and perspective.

**Table 1. Profile of Film Posters**

Title	Genre	Film Posters	Code
Unforgettable	Drama		P1
Diary ng Panget	Romantic Comedy		P2
On Vodka, Beers, and Regrets	Romance		P3
Missed Connection	Romantic Comedy		P4
One More Chance	Romance		P5
Aurora	Action/Thriller		P6
A Very Good Girl	Drama		P7
Mga Kwenteng Barbero	Drama/History		P8
Ikaw	Romance		P9
Miss Granny	Drama		P10
Bride for Rent	Romantic Comedy		P11

Maria	Action		P12
Eerie	Horror		P13
Halik sa Hangin	Horror		P14
Camp Sawi	Romantic Comedy		P15
Thelma	Drama		P16
Pagpag Nine Lives	Horror		P17
Buy Bust	Action		P18
Third is My First	Drama		P19
Arisaka	Action		P20
Four Sisters and a Wedding	Drama		P21
Lola Igna	Drama		P22
That Thing Called Tadhana	Romance		P23
Everything About Her	Drama		P24

Sid and Aya	Romance		P25
It Takes a Man and a Woman	Romance		P26
One Great Love	Romance		P27
The Mistress	Romance		P28
The Hows of Us	Romance		P29
Izla	Horror		P30
Hello, Love, Goodbye	Romance		P31
I'm Drunk, I Love You	Romance		P32
Starting Over Again	Romance		P33
Ngayon Kaya	Romance		P34
Wish You Were The One	Romance		P35
The Break-Up Playlist	Romance		P36

Tia Madre	Horror		P37
Jowables	Comedy/Drama		P38
Sunod	Horror		P39
Bambani	Drama		P40

The corpora of film posters are focused on the visibility of women in them. All of the posters have one or more female characters present, and some also have a male actor. Furthermore, these film posters were available on Netflix when they were chosen. As shown in Table 1, it presents the title, genre, the film poster, and the code. Meanwhile, the code is made up of two letters which stand for the category the film belongs to, and a number based on the sequence.

#### ***Multimodal Features Evident in Film Posters (Interactional)***

In Visual Grammar, one of the three meanings introduced by Kress and Van Leeuwen is the Interactional Meaning which is understood through gaze, size of frame, and perspective. Thirty-three out of forty film posters have an “Offer” type of gaze since their eyes are directed to another character while seven posters’ (P12, P13, P15, P17, P18, P20, P24) gaze are considered “Demand” since their eyes are directed to the audience. On the other hand, the film posters employed different social distances: twenty-three posters with close up shot, eleven with medium close shot, one with medium long shot, and two with long shot. The last multimodal feature under the interactional meaning is the perspective. All forty film posters make use of a horizontal perspective having the actors and participants in the film poster at eye level with the audience. In nineteen film posters, on the other hand, characters were positioned at an oblique angle like those in AN1 and RN1; twelve posters have their actors positioned with a frontal angle; and two posters made use of both frontal and oblique.

*Gaze.* This element refers to the eye contact that is established between the viewers and the characters in the film posters. For example, posters P12 and P20 both show women with very serious facial expressions looking directly to the viewers. This contact is considered “demand” gaze since it seeks attention from the viewers. The women’s gaze, alongside their gesture, sends the message of strength, informing the viewers that she is also strong and can be in control; a concept that is not normally affiliated to women. Therefore, these women are demanding the viewers to see them in a different light. However, among the forty film poster, the most common gaze that was utilized was the “offer” type. This can be seen in posters P5 and P6. In P5, the

woman is seen laying on her pillow with her gaze directed to something that is not visible in the poster. On the other hand, P6 shows a woman struggling in the water building no eye contact with the viewers. However it is noticeable among the film poster in which the gaze is averted from the viewers, emotions and feelings such as fear, sadness, and melancholy are common as shown in P5, P6, P8, P14, P17, P19, P22, P27, P28, P29, P31, P36, P37, P39, P40. These ideas highlight a common stereotype that women are weak and emotional.



P12

P5

*Size of Frame.* Another element of the Interactional meaning is the frame which is realized through social distance. Visually, the degree of social distance establishes the connection between the participant in the image and the viewer, often correlated with the framing of the shot. The size of frame is understood through different social distance: close shot, very close, medium close, medium shot, medium long shot, long shot, and very long shot. Posters P5 and P36 employed a close up shot showing the characters from their head up to approximately their shoulders. Because of this shot, it is easy for the viewers to see the expressions of these women, allowing more sense of familiarity towards the woman and her emotions. Meanwhile, ten film posters show the participants using a medium close shot cutting the subject from the waist down, as observed in posters in P15 and P30. Finally, P17 AND P33 are film posters that make use of long shots, in which the whole body of the characters can be seen. It can be observed that women are shown at a distance that shows their emotions (i.e. close up and medium close) emphasizing the stereotype that women are geared to showing more emotion compared to men. However, it can also be perceived that using different variations of medium and long distances women were shown in an objectified manner as observed in posters P12, P15, P30, and P38.



P5



P30



P33

*Perspective.* This dictates the viewpoint from which viewers perceive images. It revolves around the selection of angles. All the film posters' characters can be seen at a horizontal (eye level) angle, differing between oblique or frontal. Using a horizontal angle, women are placed at an eye level with the viewers which can be interpreted that women are equal to the viewers no matter the sex. Furthermore, the film posters employed both oblique and frontal angles. In posters that contain a couple, such P11, P27, P28, P31, P33, P34, P38 oblique angle was used to show the relationship of the characters. In these photos, the female characters are detached from the viewers but are positioned facing or looking at the men implying the notion that women are instead attached to their love interest. On the other hand, frontal angles can be seen in posters P2, P4, P7, P10, and P16, wherein no love interest is present. In these film posters,



women are the focus of the image allowing viewers to process the information about the characters and the movie.



P33



P10

**Multimodal Features Evident in Film Posters (Compositional)**

To understand further the multimodal features used in the film posters, the Compositional Meaning in Visual Grammar is examined. This meaning pertains to salience and informational value of the images. These factors help provide more objective understanding of the film posters' meanings. Nevertheless, these elements were only analyzed in relation to the female characters and how they are represented.

In salience, twenty-eight posters have their attention focused on the image of a woman. Contrastingly, nine of the posters placed their women on the center, six posters have the female characters placed on the left, and in thirteen posters female lead characters are positioned on the right zone of the text. Lastly, the framing highlights how fonts, colors, facial expressions establish the genre and plot of the film.

*Salience.* This element refers to the element that is given the most focus in order to stand out, which can be done through varying the degrees of color saturation, size, front and back position, value, and sharpness to name a few. Among the forty film posters, thirty posters had women as the most salient element in the image. However, salience differed in various factors.

*Color.* One visual feature that can emphasize the weight of an element is color; the producers of the texts can play with the color saturation, value or use bright colors. As shown below, P4 contains an image of a woman whose hair and shirt are both bright coloreds helping her stand out more. Similarly, P13 the woman's face is given the heaviest weight; but instead of bright colors, value was applied to accentuate the woman's face and the genre of the film.



P4



P13

*Brightness.* For this element, salience is achieved by placing a higher level of brightness on the character's face. This can be seen in posters P1 and P32. In P1, the brightness helped reinforce a calm atmosphere which also matches the genre of the film. Likewise, in P32, despite having a love interest, the woman's face received the heaviest weight exemplified by the brightness placed on the woman's face. However, highlighting the woman also underscores her emotion towards the man.



P1



P32

*Size.* Another factor that can accentuate the elements' weight is the size. For example, in P18, the woman's image is the biggest in size compared to the other characters. Seeing the woman in the center and the most salient character proves that women can have more essential roles than men.



P18

*Foreground/background.* Another tool used in highlighting women is placing the woman on the foreground making them the nearest element to the viewers. This can denote the importance that is being given to female roles nowadays. For example, P36 shows a woman crying in the foreground while a man is placed on the background. The salience does not place the focus on the character but also depicts the woman as relatable and plays a more important role than the man. Nonetheless, a woman can be placed in the background but still receive the most weight, just like in the case of P29. The man is positioned in the foreground but is blurred transferring the focus on the woman.



P36



P29

*Informational Value.* On the contrary, informational value refers to the placement of the elements in the image, and it is divided into three aspects: left and right, top and bottom, center and margin.

*Left and right.* When an element is placed on the left zone of a text, it is considered as 'given' information, something that is already known to the viewers. For example, P22 shows an old woman on the left side of the poster implying her image is the 'given' concept of what an old woman or a grandmother looks like. Placing the woman on the left is also a move to normalize the concept of aging among women. On a similar note, P28 also applies the same strategy on the female character. The placement of the female character expresses that women are ideally the third parties of relationships.



P22

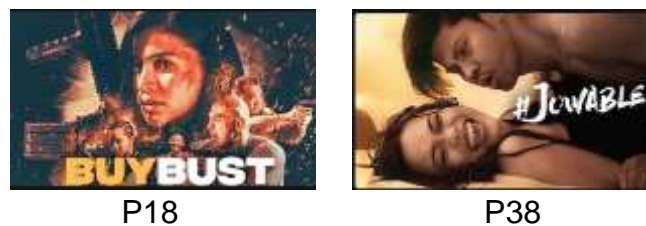


P28

Most of the posters, however, placed women on the right side of the poster. In Visual Grammar, the elements placed on the right zone of a text is considered a new information. Considering this notion, posters P12 and P20 can be read as new images of women contrasting the common stereotype of women being weak. In comparison, P19 also places the female character on the right zone of the poster, but instead prompts the idea that an old woman can also play roles with love interests breaking another stereotype romantic concepts are for the younger actors.



*Top and Bottom.* In Visual Grammar, the top and bottom zones constitute to the ideal and real information. Elements placed on the top zone of an image is considered ideal, just like in the P18, wherein the lead female character is placed in the middle top of the text signaling that she is the most important character at the same time she is the ideal portrayal a woman – strong. On the contrary, the bottom zone of a text refers to the elements as ‘real’. This means that in P38, it can be interpreted that the woman on the bottom zone is considered the real image of a woman as opposed to P18. Furthermore, the placement of the woman and the suggestive act continuously perpetuates the objectification of women.



*Center.* In ten of the posters, the center zone was used to show the importance of the female characters since elements placed on the center of a text are understood as the most important information. For example, the women in P16 and P17 are assumed as the protagonists and hold the plot of the film. It is clear that the film industry has recognized women and their capabilities by giving them prominent roles in movies and placing them in the center of the posters.



### ***Female Representations Highlighted by The Multimodal Properties***

Among the posters under the Action Process group (P1 to P24), there are twenty which show a non-transactional structure because their gaze is not directed at any other participant, or there is no vector that connects one character to another. Meanwhile, five posters are produced with a transactional structure. Moreover, among the Reactional Process group, eight posters show woman as the reactor (source of the

gaze), while four posters show the women as the phenomenon or the receiver of the gaze from the male characters.

*Action Narrative Process.* In Visual Grammar, one component of the Representational Meaning is the narrative process which consists of action, reaction, and speech and mental processes. However, analysis was focused on the first two processes since the materials are film posters.

When there is only one participant in a visual text, the image is considered an action process with a non-transactional structure since the action is not aimed at anything or anyone. In such case, something that is happening to someone but is not visible is called events. In P4, for example, only the female character is present; the representational meaning can be understood based on the available information in the text, such as the woman's expression, clothing, design, and the genre of the film. In the said poster, the woman smiles, and her gaze is directed at something that is not seen in the poster. Since the genre of the film is romance, the event can be assumed that she is in love. This manner of interpretation can also be applied to P5, another poster that is non-transactional, wherein the woman is shown with an emotional facial expression.

In contrast to non-transactional structure, when there are two participants in the image, and the action is aimed at a Goal, it is considered a transactional structure. In such kind of structures, a vector is present; these vectors allow viewers to interpret the relationship of the participants. In P23, it can be seen that the two characters are smiling, and both can be considered as the Goal of each other's smile. Through the vector (action) the characters can be understood as love interests of each other, which is also supported by the genre of the film.

*Reaction Narrative Process.* Reactional narrative process, on the other hand, is when the participants are connected by a vector using their gaze. In this process, there are two components: the reactor, the one who is looking; and the phenomenon, the receiver of the gaze. The female character in P4, P5, and P23 are different representation of women that the media show. In P4 and P24, the posters show that women normally tend to play roles of a love interest. Meanwhile, P5 shows that women are more or less likely to express deep emotions.

### ***Shaping The Construction of Feminine Images***

There were four themes observed among the responses of the participants: women's stereotypical image portrayal, progressive female characters, stereotype subversion, and objectification. These themes aid the process of analyzing how women are portrayed in film posters and how these portrayals can influence the perceptions of femininity.

*Women's Stereotypical Image Portrayal.* This theme emphasized the examination of women's depictions through stereotypical lenses, highlighting that media representations often conform to simplistic and preconceived ideas of femininity. The participants are aware of different stereotypes women have played throughout time which include roles where women are shown as submissive, reliant, and dependent to men, emotional socioeconomically challenged, weak. Given that the posters are from movies produced from 2010 to 2023 but are still evident of these stereotypes reflects the kind of film industry the Philippine has.

*Progressive Female Characters.* This underscores the notion of women progressing and advancing in their roles, reflecting character development and empowerment. It emphasizes the positive evolution and forward momentum in the portrayal of female characters. The responses of the participants imply that there has been a change in

terms of how women are portrayed in films. From the posters that were presented, the participants observed that women have become empowered by playing roles that were not commonly to women. In addition, there is a clear movement to rid ageism in the Philippine film industry by casting with older women to play lead roles.

*Stereotype Subversion.* This theme captures the core idea of challenging and dismantling traditional gender norms and expectations depicted in films. It effectively conveys the notion of moving beyond stereotypical portrayals of women and embracing more varied and empowering characterizations. Evidently, the participants saw that current film posters have shifted their narratives from a male dominated industry to allowing women to thrive and play diverse roles. These roles include women being independent from men. Also, women are already shown strong in contrary to the stereotype of being weak.

*Objectification.* This is a recurring theme in cinema that reflects broader societal issues regarding gender roles and power dynamics. This theme can manifest in various ways, including the portrayal of women as mere objects of male desire, the reduction of female characters to their physical attributes, and the lack of depth in their personalities or story arcs. It was clear that even in recent Filipino films, women are still objectified. In some poster, female characters were dressed in revealing clothes and posed suggestively catering to the male gaze. Moreover, the women are objectified by attaching them to high beauty standards which are unrealistic and can negatively affect their physical views of themselves.

### ***Overall Impression Created by The Film Posters on Different Categories of Viewers***

*Influence of Marketing and Promotion.* This theme is about how movie posters significantly influence viewers when deciding which films to watch. Furthermore, it also highlights the how the participants view film posters. Despite the differences in terms of age and scope of knowledge, the responses of the participants during the IDI revealed that they rely on film posters in choosing which films to watch. Also, both categories of viewers agree that film posters are effective medium to express the movie's genre and plot. From the responses of the participants, it is evident how representations can be easily disseminated through visual texts such as film posters.

*Engagement and Interaction.* A common theme unearthed among the responses of the participants is the engagement and interaction of the posters. This theme refers to the visual elements that participants observe when looking at movie posters. The responses pointed out different visual elements the participants are keen on. The elements include color, simple design, visibility of the lead characters, font type and size, facial expressions, and spatial design. The appropriateness in use of these elements does not only elevate the visual appeal of the poster but can also affect how the representations are perceived by the viewers.

## **Discussion**

The analysis of the film posters revealed that the multimodal features such as gaze, social distance, perspective, size of frame, and informational value underscore different female representation.

*Gaze.* Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) elaborated that multimodal texts consist of different types of gazes. Demand images refers to when the participants' gaze is directed to the viewers, while offer gaze is aimed to another participant in the image. Valentini (2018), Bünzli et al. (2022) described direct gaze to serve various functions in interpersonal communication and persuasion, including signaling social affiliation,

social control, and attention orientation, demanding a response from the viewers. Wang et al. (2023) also suggests that demand gaze is linked to power. Wang et al. further discussed that women tend to employ more of a demanding gaze, which is associated with power, as opposed to an offering gaze, which is connected to a sense of weakness. Their ideas can support the analysis that the gaze of the female character such as in posters P12 and P20 emanates power and strength.

On the other hand, majority of the film poster used are consider 'offer' images. As defined by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) as offer images are those texts wherein the gaze of the participants is averted from the viewers. They further suggested that 'offer' images are characterized by the presence of a barrier, either real or implied, between the viewers and the subjects depicted, creating a sense of detachment. Thus, 'offer' images are common in contexts that can provide a sense of disengagement like films and television dramas. Valentini (2018) argues that averted gaze is a sign for the lack of social closeness, interest and social engagement. However, Baberini (2015) provides a different point of view by saying that averted gaze improves perception especially with emotions like fear and sadness. Baberini's argument can support posters RN3, RN4, RN5, RN12, and RN 6 wherein the gaze of the female characters is not directed to the viewers, but their sadness is still clearly expressed, an emotion that is normally attributed to being weak.

*Size of Frame.* Another element of the Interactional meaning is the frame which is realized through social distance. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) believed that the degree of social distance establishes the connection between the participant in the image and the viewer, often correlated with the framing of the shot. The most common distance used in the film poster was close shot which Sun (2017) and Zhao (2023) defined as a feature of an intimate or close relation. Thus, film posters with women framed in close shot established the intimate relationship and sense of familiarity between the viewers and the participants in the poster.

Meanwhile, ten film posters the participants using a medium close shot cutting the subject from the waist down. In Nguyen's (2017) study, it was stipulated that medium close shot is used to show the characters as ordinary people, still making their facial expression visible enough without dominating the viewer's feelings. Finally, AN17 and RN9 are film posters that made use of long shot, in which the whole body of the characters can be seen. Wang et al. (2023) considers this shot as impersonal or equivalent to a public distance signaling that there is no attempt to build an intimate relationship.

*Perspective.* The final element of Interactive Meaning is perspective, which dictates the viewpoint from which viewers perceive images. It revolves around the selection of angles. All the film posters' characters can be seen at an eye level, with a difference on the angle – oblique or horizontal. For Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), eye level in visual discourse signifies equality between the characters and the viewers. Ergo, women are depicted as equal entities to whoever is looking at them. On the other hand, Yin and Hassan (2021) explained that oblique angles are used to show detachment of the participants from the viewers. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) further illustrate that oblique angles incite the idea that the viewers are 'others' and do not belong to the world in the film poster. In addition, Asghar et al. (2022) explained the use of oblique angle suggests that the attachment is rather placed to the central figure in the text. Their ideas can explain that detachment value observed in posters P11, P27, P28, P31, P33, P34, P38 wherein the women are positioned away from the viewers but instead attached to their male leads. Therefore, the use of oblique angle

can feature a female stereotype that women are inclined to roles that involve love interests. However, in film posters like P8, P12, P13, P19, P20 detachment is still evident, but because of the angle the female characters are shown to be mysterious (Wang & Liu, 2023). Through this angle, the characters were given an opportunity to be seen outside of the stereotypical concepts of being weak or emotional.

Another angle that was observed among the film posters is frontal angle. As opposed to the oblique angle, Zhao (2023) stated that a frontal angle reduces the gap between viewers and the subjects, suggesting an egalitarian connection, while Ledin and Machin (2020) expressed that frontal angle allows the characters to acknowledge the viewers. Among the film posters, this angle was observed with film posters wherein only the female character is present. This angle lets viewers see the participants in an objective way and properly process the information. In addition, Wang and Liu's (2023) study showed that a frontal angle is observed to show a fuller view of the scenario, but an oblique angle is utilized when a sense of mystery is to be attained.

*Saliency.* It refers to the element that is given the most focus in order to stand out. Saliency can be achieved through different elements such as color, size, framing, or the use of foreground and background (Belgrimet & Rabab'ah, 2021). In film poster P14, the poster shows a man looking at a woman, but the woman holds the most focus because of her angle and facial expression. Another example is P8 which also shows a man at an oblique angle looking at a woman. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) and Nguyen (2021), placing the focus on a character can signify the hierarchy of importance between the represented elements which defines some of them as more important and worthy of attention than other. Nonetheless, the use of saliency does not only point the viewers' attention to the most important character, but it can also be a tool to induce to the viewers different representations underscored by the participants.

*Informational Value.* This deals with the placement of the elements (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Similarly, Jewitt (2014) defines informational value as the importance given to elements in a composition based on their placement, such as left-right, top-bottom, and center-margin. The results of the analysis showed that ten out of the forty film posters placed the female characters on the center making them the most important information. For posters like P17 wherein a woman is positioned on the center, as explained by Bo (2018), is taken as the most important information. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) also posited that placing elements on the center has been a common practice in different time and places. They referenced Arnheim (1982), who noted that portraits in Byzantine churches typically depict a pope or emperor. Additionally, the central placement of these portraits underscores themes of hierarchy, harmony, and continuity.

The left zone means that the element is considered given and is familiar to the audience. Belgrimet and Rabab'ah (2021) that the "given" information is weighed on the audience's culture. This means that the woman in P2 who is placed on the left zone is a 'given' image of what 'ugly' based on what the society dictates as ugly. Goldman and Waymer (2014) discovered female beauty is represented in different ways. Media would portray 'ugly' by dumbing a female's looks just wearing unfashionable clothing. On the other hand, the right zone which holds the meaning that the element is considered "new" information (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Such notion helps viewers to interpret a poster like AN 12 and AN20 to be producing a "new" image of a woman – strong and brave.

Contrastingly, the top-bottom zones also have their own meanings. Any element placed on the top of a visual text is assumed as an 'ideal' information, while the bottom zone introduces 'real' information. The informational value of the female lead helps viewers understand the different representation that the characters carry (Nurudeen et al., 2021).

*Female Representations Highlighted by The Multimodal Properties.*

The meaning of the film poster was analyzed using the Representational Meaning focusing on the Narrative Process which is divided into Action Process and Reactional Process. Under the Action Process the film posters may be coded as transactional or non-transactional (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). Among the twenty-four film posters, nineteen of them are non-transactional, while five are considered transactional. These two processes differ in terms of the presence of a vector. Transactional images like AN11, the vector is established through the hug connecting the man and the woman which fulfills the genre of the movie is romantic comedy. This idea is supported by Yin and Zhang (2014) who explained that when a vector is present it can illustrate the succeeding action to unfold in the story.

As for the film posters coded as non-transactional, there are no vectors present but it allows viewers to be intrigued of what will happen in the story. In AN8, a woman bears a serious expression on her face but there is no particular action is observable leaving the audience to imagine the role of the woman and what the movie would be about signifying that a woman can also be mysterious and that there is more to a woman than just the stereotypes placed on her.

In contrast, twenty of the posters are considered to use Reactional Processes because of the presence of a reactor and a phenomenon. Among of which, eight show the female characters as the source of the gaze, while the man is the phenomenon, or the receiver of the gaze; and four posters depicted the opposite visual image with the man looking at the woman. In this. According to Yin and Hassan (2021), when individuals depicted in an image are linked by vectors, it implies that they are engaged in some form of action or interaction with each other. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) echoed the words of Goffman who claimed that "when a man and a woman collaborate in an undertaking, the man is likely to perform the executive role". They further elucidated that a woman's gazed geared towards a man can imply gender hierarchy by men being superior compared to their onlookers. Also, when women are looking at men, it a display of flirting and admiration rather than of power and dominance.

*Shaping The Construction of Feminine Images.*

*Women's stereotypical Image Portrayal.* In the thematic analysis, it was discovered that the most the participants are aware of different stereotypes that have placed on women. Based on the definition of Hogg and Vaughan (2017), stereotype is a fixed, oversimplified, and often exaggerated belief or idea about a particular group of people. These beliefs or ideas are typically based on assumptions, biases, or prejudices, rather than on individual characteristics or merits. One common stereotype observed by the participants is the submissiveness of women. Manon (2021) suggested that there is a belief in society that women are naturally submissive, which is seen as morally and inherently acceptable. This belief also originates from the idea that women are viewed as inferior to men, and that their freedom could impede their submissive nature. This notion of women is parallel to the idea of Amores et al. (2020), which stated that visual



texts normally depict women as submissive because of the stereotype that has been reinforced by the patriarchal society. In addition, De Weert (2021), in prevailing gender stereotypes, women are often associated with traits like reliance, emotionality, gentleness, humility, and nurturing, whereas men are typically portrayed as powerful, capable, assertive, and significant.

Fong and Nyathi (2019) also revealed other stereotypes of women in some feature articles, and this includes "accomplished," which appears most frequently at 30.61%, followed by "gentle and kind" and "emotional," each at 18.37%. In the study of Amores et al. (2020), women are featured as the central figures in news stories, often portrayed through photographs, they typically assume roles that uphold the norms dictated by patriarchal societies. These roles often lead to their objectification and portray them as submissive and vulnerable. Similarly, Grover and Hundal (2014) also saw that patriarchal notions affect how women are depicted in visual texts, and this includes that women are in charge of domestic roles.

*Progressive female characters.* Another theme that has come out of the in-depth interview is the notion on empowerment. The participants believe that the women on the posters are depicted as empowered, strong and independent, given more salient roles, and are shown to undergo character development compared to earlier movies. These ideas can be supported by a couple of studies have shown that there have been changes with the kind of roles women are playing in recent times. For instance, in the Philippines, Ancheta (2016) mentioned that female characters are currently given prominence through powerful roles. On the other hand, male characters are portrayed as secondary to the female leads, indicating a transfer of authority from men to women. Progressive female characters are not isolated in the current times, even during the Golden Age (1930s-140s) a time when societies were extremely patriarchal, tough, resilient, and brave female characters were already portrayed in some movies. Women played non-traditional roles and were depicted to step on men's shoes in caring the family and work at the same time.

This suggests the potential for a matriarchal society, contrasting with the previously patriarchal nature of many societies. Nonetheless, despite the empowerment received and seen by women, there is still a considerable amount of underrepresentation in the media because they are yet given lesser screen time compared to men according to Amores et al. (2020). However, Koka (2020) opposes such idea by claiming that there has been a noticeable shift in recent years. Over the past decade, female characters have been depicted with greater complexity and have been given increased screen time. *Stereotype subversion.* Through the interview, the participants expressed their positive take on how women's roles have been changing overtime, such as women being independent from men. Bakhtiari and Salimi (2014) documented that there was significant shift in women's roles in Hollywood. They also noticed that women have been shown to resist male supremacy which supports one of the core ideas developed during the interview that women are depicted as to have become independent from men. Cao et al. (2021) also strengthens the idea that women's roles have shifted based on themes, narratives, and roles that resonate with female audiences and mirror the evolving societal landscape, portraying women as equals to men.

Challenging stereotypes in media is necessary. As Steiner (2014) suggests, it is necessary to acknowledge gender as a significant factor in shaping identity and experiences, without assuming fixed or unchanging gender differences. Instead, gender

interacts with various dimensions of identity, such as race, class, ability, nationhood, and sexual orientation, as well as the power dynamics inherent in these categories.

*Objectification.* Song (2022) believes that men and women are equally important in the field of mass media; yet undeniably remains a male dominated industry. Because of this objectification is inevitable in the industry. When women are seen as object it underscores the expectation that women should be attractive and, as they age, maintain their sexual allure. Fong and Nyathi shared the claims of Tartaglia and Rollero (2015) and Arauna and Tarragona (2013) that the technological and more forward thinking did not hinder media to continuously depict women in unfavorable ways; women are objectified by showing their private body parts, backside, lips and eyes. Similarly, Collin and Bissell (2014) noted that objectification in advertisements happen by depicting women as slender and youthful, conforming to the prevailing beauty standards across numerous countries and cultures. This observation is substantiated by Rapanot et al. (2020), who found that advertisements in the Philippines frequently feature women (93.9%) dressed in less clothing compared to men (79.8%).

A concept that is relevant to objectification is the “male gaze” which according to Mulvey (1975; cited ion Mulvey, 20913) is the typical scenario involving the "gaze" featuring a dominant entity expressing the desire to observe, with the target of the gaze being the subject upon which power is imposed and fueled by desire. Wang and Liu (2023) added that men, benefiting from a patriarchal society, often take on the role of the "gazer," evaluating women's appearance, character, and identity. This scrutiny affects all women within such a cultural framework. In film and television, female characters are frequently sexualized to cater to the visual pleasure of male viewers, often through their clothing and storylines.

#### *Overall Impression Created by The Film Posters on Different Categories of Viewers*

*Influence of Marketing and Promotion.* This theme is concerned with the overall impression that the posters have on both categories of participants. Stokmans (2015) and Nguyen (2021) held the idea that one of the purposes of film posters is to change the viewer's attitude toward the film; thus, they need to contain important information. With a parallel idea, Nurudeen et al. (2021) also said that film producers utilize film publicity as a key strategy to boost the audience turnout for their films, and this publicity process holds significant importance within the overall movie production cycle. These ideas resonated with most of the participants who agreed that movie posters influence them in choosing what movie to watch. Furthermore, participants voiced that posters also need to portray the movie's content properly. On the same line, Nguyen (2021) shared that posters do not only need to catch viewer's attention but should also build a strong tie with the movie's content and significant role images play that hint at the movie's storyline.

*Engagement and Interaction.* The last theme that was revealed through the analysis is about the visually compelling designs and interactive elements utilized in producing film posters which capture the attention of the viewers. Participants from both categories agreed that a poster can become more enticing through its visual components, including color choice, the characters, font style, and spatial design. According to Tao (2022), visual text, such as a film poster, encompasses psychological, scene, color, and language design. Subsequently, Patria et al. (2019) mentioned that the illustration in a film poster is the main element of the text and followed by the text.

In terms of the fonts, Wang and Liu (2019) explained that the text is the basic element of a film poster; therefore, choosing the best font that matches the movie's content and genre allow the audience easily get information about the movie. Moreover, Patria et al. (2019) also added that a film poster should follow certain design principles in terms of arranging, organizing, and managing them. They also added that a poster design can follow the principle: Sequence, Emphasis, and Balance. Finally, Pooranalingam's (2024) study agrees that a film poster achieves success by effectively targeting a specific audience, which is accomplished through design elements that align with the genre of the film.

## CONCLUSION

Through the data and analysis done, the following can be concluded:

When analyzing the multimodal aspects of film posters, mainly through Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar, various elements emerge regarding how these posters create and convey messages to audiences. Interactional elements like gaze, social distance, and perspective are crucial in shaping how viewers perceive the characters depicted. The gaze selection, whether demanding or offering, can impact viewers' understanding of the power dynamics and emotions portrayed in the posters. Likewise, the framing of shots, whether close-up, medium close, or long shots, affects the audience's perception of closeness or detachment from the characters. Moreover, the perspective chosen, whether oblique or horizontal, can evoke different levels of engagement and intrigue for viewers.

Furthermore, compositional meanings, such as salience and informational value, highlight how certain elements are emphasized to convey the central themes or characters of the film. The placement of female characters in the center or on the right zone of the poster may signify their importance or introduce new information to viewers. Similarly, using vectors in transactional images and reactors in reactional processes guides viewers in understanding the dynamics between characters and the unfolding narrative.

Through thematic analysis, it becomes apparent that film posters play a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. While stereotypes of women as submissive or objectified persist, there is also evidence of resistance and subversion within recent film representations. Empowerment is a significant theme, with female characters depicted as strong, independent, and undergoing character development, challenging traditional gender norms. However, objectification remains a prevalent issue, with women often portrayed based on societal expectations of beauty and sexual allure.

In conclusion, the overall impression created by film posters on different categories of viewers is influenced by the marketing and promotional strategies employed and the engagement and interaction stimulated by the visual design elements. Successful film posters effectively target specific audiences through their design choices, aligning with the genre and content of the film to capture attention and convey essential information. As film posters continue to evolve in their design and messaging, they play a vital role in shaping audience perceptions and expectations of cinematic narratives and representations of gender.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my dissertation adviser, mentors, family and friends for the unending support they have shown. Without them, the completion of this paper would have been impossible.

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