



## Semiotic Analysis of Pakistani Drama Cover Pages

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### Abstract

The aim of this project is to find out the different layers of meaning and different interpretations of meaning on the cover pages of Pakistani dramas through semiotic analysis. For this purpose, six cover pages of different Pakistani dramas were selected and analyzed in terms of semiotics. The size, color, dresses, and facial expressions were deeply analyzed. The analysis showed that there were multiple meanings that were conveyed to the audience through different schemes of colors, dresses, and styles presented on the cover pages of dramas. Different major aspects of society were also analyzed, like religious, social, cultural, etc. It was investigated how these aspects were portrayed on the cover pages of dramas. The study revealed that semiotic analysis helps the audience understand the hidden meanings of the cover pages. It also helped to know what the theme of the story was and what the characteristics of the characters were.

**Keywords:** semiotics, analysis, characteristics, meanings, interpretations

### 1. Introduction

Language is a complex and widely used phenomenon. People use language to communicate and to share their views and ideas with other members of society. Sometimes language may have multiple layers of meaning, and to understand these multiple meanings, we must know the context of that language. People produce different discourses to convey different meanings.

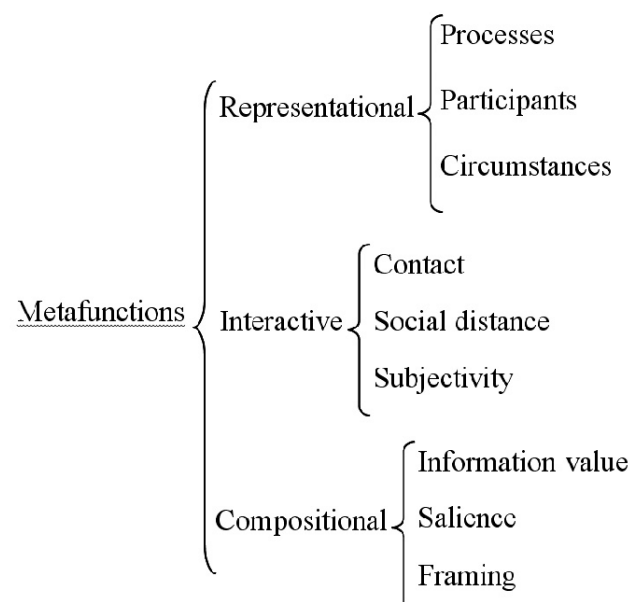
Design is a visual language that describes the message to be transmitted with visual signs or solves the problem that is wanted to be solved using visual elements. Visual communication creates the same feeling and emotion among all the people, without it being necessary to speak a certain language. Therefore, graphic design is a visual art. The way the image of the object format we see is perceived at all points in the world is the same; it is a common language (Gunay, 2021).

#### 1.1 What is Semiotics?

Semiotics can be considered a tool for evaluating something in order to derive multiple meanings that are covered in any discourse. Language can be analyzed from connotative and denotative perspectives. By denotation, we mean the objective and literal meaning of language, while connotation refers to the contextual and cultural meanings of language. These are the subjective types of meanings that involve our personal emotions and interpretations. For example, by red rose, we mean feelings of love and freshness, but at the same time, it can denote sadness if the red roses are spread on a grave.

According to the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce, signs are of three types: icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons include drawings, paintings, maps, graphs, or photographs. Indexes are signs with physical connections, like black smoke, which indicates air pollution. And the symbols include flags, logos, words, etc.

Kress and Leeuwen (2006) presented a model of multimodality in which they described different dimensions of the analysis of designs. It was highlighted how visuals can be analyzed from different perspectives.



They stated three dimensions of analysis:

- Representational meanings
- Interactive meanings
- Compositional meanings

The first way to understand the designs is from a representational perspective, in which images are analyzed and it is investigated which thing represents what aspect of life. It helps to know what kind of representation there is. The researcher tries to find out the symbolic meanings of the things. The actions are analyzed to understand their personalities and their mental processes as well.

The second perspective stated, the interactive perspective, covers different dimensions of things. The relationship between these things is covered in this analysis. The link between the things and their effects on each other are also highlighted. Their behavior and attitudes also come under observation.

The third one is compositional perspective, in which it is analyzed how things are composed, what the schemes of colors are, and how they denote different meanings. The different sizes of the objects are also investigated to see their importance, and similarly, the tone also conveys the meanings. So, the compositions of all the things are analyzed in the compositional dimension.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Language has different aspects, and each aspect conveys its own meaning. Graphs and designs are also ways of communicating, but the purpose of communication can be fulfilled if the researcher is able to understand the hidden meanings. But the purpose remains unfulfilled until the researcher makes himself able to drag out the meanings. Semiotics helps the researcher in this regard.

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

This study will help to understand how meanings can be derived from different aspects of language. It will help us understand the multiple meanings behind the cover pages. The study will reveal how colors, sizes, and expressions portray different meanings.

### 1.4 Delimitation of the Study

The study was conducted only on the Pakistani drama cover pages. Only six cover pages were selected for semiotic analysis.

### 1.5 Research Questions

- How does semiotic analysis of Pakistani drama cover pages help to find out the hidden meanings?
- How does the semiotic analysis of the cover pages of Pakistani dramas highlight the different aspects and ideologies of society?
- How do different schemes of colors, sizes, and facial expressions denote multiple meanings?

### 1.6 Research Objectives

Following are the research objectives:

- To find out the multiple meanings covered in Pakistani drama pages
- To find out the different aspects of society and ideologies portrayed in Pakistani drama cover pages through semiotic analysis
- To find out the meanings from the colors, size, and style of the pictures

## 2. Literature Review

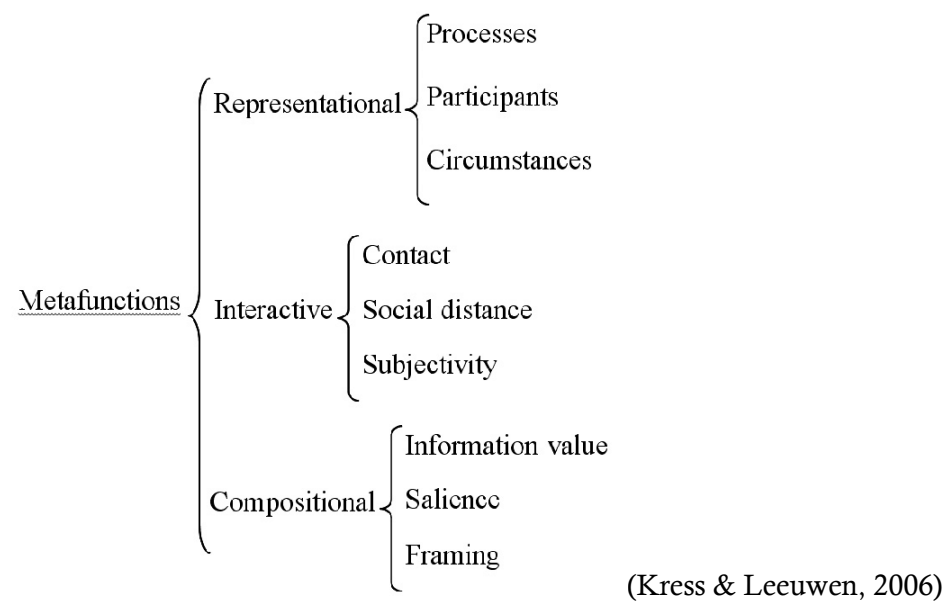
No approach in the field of semiotics is superior to another. The superiority of an analysis is determined, not by inherent methodological differences, but by the consistency of the method. Regardless of which methodical approach is adopted, a work of art will always, by its very nature, include additional elements. Owing to their uniqueness, works of art are a closed organic whole; but they also embody an open structure due to their susceptibility to being perceived and interpreted in a variety of ways. No analysis, therefore, can be considered flawless or complete (Batu, 2012).

There was research on the flags, identity, and memory of Nigeria. The basic purpose of this research was to make a semiotic analysis of all of these. The beliefs and aspirations of the people of that particular country were analyzed through semiotic analysis. The colors of the flags were also studied, and it was discussed in the study what kind of meanings they were denoting and what kind of values were transmitted to the people of Nigeria. It was analyzed what the symbolic significance of the flag is in political and socio-economic issues (Wagner, 2018).

There was research on commercials broadcast on famous Pakistani channels. The purpose of this research was to make a semiotic analysis of the commercials and to highlight their symbolic meanings. The findings revealed that the commercials have different layers of meaning. The gender representation was also analyzed; they were analyzed symbolically, and the result showed that they denoted the meanings that were specifically related to them. For example, the picture of the male gender showed the patriarchal structure of society (Nasir, 2018).

A study was conducted to make a semiotic analysis of zeera plus biscuit advertisement. The verbal and non-verbal signs of zeera plus biscuit advertisement were analyzed. The shape, colors and other visual aspects were analyzed to understand the different layers of meanings. A qualitative approach was used to describe the hidden and multiple meanings (Arslan, Faizullah & Shahbaz, 2023).

Various researchers Kubra, Murtza and Akhter (2017) have worked on the title pages of dramas, but their focus was limited to cultural representations. They selected three drama title pages as a sample for their study, and a semiotic analysis was conducted in order to investigate how the title pages are represented culturally. Another study was conducted on Pakistani drama title pages. Only two dramas were selected as a sample for the study. The researcher conducted an analysis of Pakistani dramas title pages to know their hidden meanings. A model by Kress was used to analyze the title pages. The researcher used different title pages of a drama in which the images were different and their styles were also different. In this way, the researcher analyzed them from different perspectives. Different images helped the researcher learn about the story line, the theme of the drama, and what is going to happen in the next episode (Mushtaq, Shah, & Naureen, 2021). The model that was used by the researcher was the following:



There was a major research gap that the researcher found for the present study. The previous researcher selected very limited dramas for the analysis. Different cover pages of different dramas denote different meanings, and to find out further dimensions of meanings, the researcher selected other dramas cover pages. There is space for research on different cover pages of dramas.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The random sampling technique was used to select the sample for the research. Six Pakistani drama cover pages were selected as a sample of the research. The selected drama cover pages are the following:

- Pari Zaad
- Bakht Aawar
- Zeebaish
- Raqs-e-Bismil
- Sinf-e-Ahan
- Khuda or Muhabbat

The drama cover pages were analyzed to understand the multiple hidden meanings. A semiotic analysis was conducted for this purpose, and the model of multimodality designed by Kress and Lueween (2006) was used as the framework for the analysis. Each and every aspect of the cover pages was investigated. The size, scheme of colors, dresses, facial expressions, hair styles, poses, and backgrounds of the characters were analyzed in order to understand the multiple meanings. Their dresses showed what kind of life they were living and to which family background they belonged. They also symbolized different ideologies of life, like religion, culture, politics, and materialism. Their facial expressions revealed their inner feelings of happiness and sadness. Their eye expressions showed their mental processes and what was happening in their minds. Their backgrounds revealed what aspects of life the drama cover pages are supposed to depict. After the analysis, the researcher found different layers of meaning, and the results were discussed in the conclusion.

### 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The framework of the model of multimodality was used to conduct semiotic analysis.

#### Analysis 1



The analysis is done in different dimensions. The very first image that captures our attention is the picture of the young male. When the researcher conducted a semiotic analysis of the picture, it showed that the size of the image shows that it is the leading role of the drama. His shalwar qameez indicates that the person has a simple and decent personality. His shirt buttons, which are completely enclosed, also symbolize that he may have an introverted kind of personality. His traditional, simple hairstyle shows that he is not fashionable or modern. The color complexion of his face is dark, and in our society, dark complexion is not as acceptable as it should be. His dark color may lead him to have an inferior complex. It also indicates that he has experienced a tough time of his life. The eye and facial expressions of the man are also serious and a little bit confused.

The other image of a girl at the back of the first man is very catchy. The very first thing about the girl that captures our attention is the statue of a female in her hands. She is touching the statue in such a way that she is trying to identify whose statue it is. Her closed eyes also

create suspense. Her closed eyes show that it might be possible that she is blind. Her dress having multiple colors refers to the fact that she has colorful life in her surroundings, but she is unable to see the colors of life. Different colors in her dress may also indicate that she has a multidimensional personality. Her untied hair denotes that she is full of life, and despite her blindness, she tries to enjoy life. The position of the image is behind the main character, and their closeness shows that there may be some relationship or connection between both of them.

There is another male person on the page who is wearing traditional black shalwar qamiz and a black coat as well. His dressing shows that he is a well-set person or a businessman, as compared to the first one. He is looking older than the first one, and the age denotes the meaning of experience in life. His facial expressions are showing that he is an authoritative person who may have authority to rule over others. There is also a girl who is wearing a black saarhi, which shows that she is a fashionable and modern girl. The ear rings in her ears show that she is fond of fashion. It also denotes that she is a rich lady who is able to afford such things. Her hair style, her eyes, and her way of standing show that she may have a connection with the showbiz industry or she may be an independent girl. By appearance, she is a beautiful girl who can capture the attention of others with her beauty. The black color of her dress indicates that she has no colors in her life. Her soul is dark, and she is not happy with her life.

The third girl is wearing shalwar and qamiz, which give her the touch of an eastern girl. The embroidery on her qamiz, the 'jhumkas' in her ears, and the untied hair show that she is a girl full of life and wants to enjoy all colors of life. Her facial expressions, her smile, and her smiling eyes show that she is happy with her life. The fourth girl who is wearing a gent's shalwar and qamiz refers to a tom boy. She has tied a piece of cloth around her forehead that shows that she is like the boy who wonders here and there in the streets and who is always free and has nothing to do. She is folding her shirt sleeves, which indicates that she is ready to do something. Her folded sleeves symbolize that she is a careless type of person. Her untied hair gives a touch of womanhood, but her short haircut also indicates that she lacks womanhood.

The last character in the drama is a girl whose image size is the smallest. The small size of the image shows that she may have a minor role in the drama, or her appearance in the drama may be for a short period of time. The small size also shows that her character has been given less importance. Her facial expressions are little bit confused. Her eyes and expressions show that she is looking for someone. The color of her hair gives a touch of modernism and fashion. Her hair is tied, and some of her locks are spreading on her face, which shows that there might be a conflict in her mind and that her personality may have some chaos.

The title of the drama "Pari Zaad" is something different and new. We cannot guess if that is the name of a male or female. By 'Pari Zaad', the researcher may assume that the main character of the drama has this name. 'Pari zaad' denotes that the main character may have a pure and beautiful soul that is different from that of modern man.

## Analysis 2



In this drama page, the same girl is depicted in different styles. The very first thing that attracts the researcher's attention is that she is wearing different dresses in each picture. The question arises as to why she is shown differently in each picture. The semiotic analysis helped the researcher answer this question.

In the very first picture, she is wearing a gentleman's shirt and has a bag on her back. Bag refers to the burden of responsibilities she has to deal with in her life. Her gent's dressing shows that she may be unable to survive in society in the get-up of a female, which is why she has changed her get-up and is trying to hide her identity. Her short haircut also gives her the look of a man. Her short haircut may symbolize that she is trying to reduce the burden of her responsibilities. The smile on her face tries to show that she wants to live a happy life and is optimistic. The other picture is of the same girl, in which she has covered her head with a pink scarf. This means that she is trying to hide her hair, and her pink scarf symbolizes womanhood. In this getup, she is looking like an Eastern girl. The serious expressions on her face show that she is not happy with her present situation. In the third picture, she is appearing in the get-up of a boy again. Here she is wearing a gentleman's shalwar and qamiz, with a scarf around her neck and a cap on her head. Her look reveals that she is a worker boy. And her facial expressions are also annoying and they show that she is not satisfied with something. Her hairstyle shows that he is a decent guy.

In the third picture, the girl has covered her face with a dupatta. The pink color of her dress again symbolizes womanhood, and the white color may refer to something that is pure. The overall look has a touch of a religious aspect. She is appearing as a noble girl in this picture. She is standing at the door and trying to look outside, which shows that she is looking for something new and better in her life. Her eyes and expressions show that she is fearful. She might be fearful of people in society.

In the fourth picture, she is wearing a dress in yellow and red colors. Red symbolizes love, while yellow symbolizes friendship. This getup is a little bit different from the previous ones. These variations may indicate that it might be possible that she is in love with someone or that she is in friendship. Her hair is longer than the previous ones, and long hair symbolizes feminism and womanhood. The beautiful smile on her face shows that she is happy with her life.

In the last picture, she has books in her hands, and the books denote the meaning of knowledge. The smile on her face shows that she is fond of getting an education. Her eyes are full of life and show that she has some powerful ambitions to be fulfilled. All the pictures stated different circumstances in her life. The different get-ups show that she has to change her identity according to the situation. Sometimes she appears as a boy, and sometimes she is a girl.

The name of the drama "Bakht Awar" also has different layers of meanings. This name is used for both genders, and it is hard to identify whether the person who has this name is a boy or girl. The second aspect of the name is its meaning. 'Bakht' means luck, and 'Awar'

means having something. By "Bakht Awar", the researcher assumed that it might be possible that the character is having good or bad luck. The overall page consists of only one girl. It means that the whole drama is revolving around the main character, this girl.

### Analysis 3



In this drama cover page, the main focus is on the girl wearing Saari, a dark red color. Red refers to an ambitious nature. And dark shades of color increase its intensity. Her "saari" shows that she is not following the eastern culture because "Saari" is not part of Pakistani dress. Her dress may indicate that she may have a link with the upper class or showbiz industry. Her hair is untied, which shows her freedom and also indicates that she is independent. The size of the picture indicates that she is the main character of the drama.

The other lady on the cover page is older than the previous one. She has the same look as the previous one. The resemblance between both of them indicates that the old generation is being followed by the new one. But the color of her dress is black, which shows the stage of her life in which she has no dreams. The dark color also symbolizes the dark aspects of her life. But her style shows that she has enjoyed life just like the young girl. Old age also symbolizes that she has experienced life. The curls of her hair suggest that she is having some conflict in her life. Her smile shows her happiness. The size of the picture reveals that her character comes at the second number.

Then there are two males on the cover page; one is a boy, and the other is older than him. The boy is wearing a T-shirt, and the other man is wearing a formal dress. Their dressing shows their personalities; the boy may be the kind of person who has no responsibility, while the old man's dressing indicates that he is a well-mannered person. The white hair of the old man shows the stage of life, or the life full of experiences. His eyes and expressions are not understandable.

The title of the play "Zeebaish" refers to the decoration or orientation of something. The title of the drama denotes the aspect of materialism in which the people chase materialistic things. And they also forget their moral and cultural values for the sake of wealth and a luxurious life.

### Analysis 4



The cover page of the drama consists of one girl and one boy. It shows that these are the main characters of the drama. The colors of their dresses are thrilling. The boy is wearing white, and the girl is wearing red. White symbolizes spirituality and pure nature. It also refers to the religious aspects of society. It means that the boy belongs to a religious family background. While the red color is a symbol of danger and love as well. But according to the context, the red color here symbolizes love. The girl's scarf is touching the ground instead of covering her head. It shows that she may lack some moral values or it also depicts that there may be deterioration of our moral values in our society. So, the contrast of white and red refers to the contrast between two different aspects of life. In the picture, the boy is sitting on a stool while the girl is sitting on the floor. It shows that they belong to a male-dominated society where women are considered inferior as compared to men. It may also refer to the fact that the ideology of religion is greater than all the other ideologies of life. The boy's dressing style shows that he is not a fashionable man. The way he sits shows his humble nature. He is looking at the girl in such a way that he is demanding something from her. The girl's mood is annoying. There is a contrast between the moods of both of them.

In the picture, the boy is holding the hand of the girl, indicating that he is going to protect her from society. The title of the drama "Raqs-e-Bismil" has double meanings. "Raqs" means dance, and "Bismil" refers to an afflicted lover. The whole thing denotes the dance of an afflicted lover.

### Analysis 5



The cover page of this drama is different from other drama pages. The very first thing that captures the attention of the researcher is that the characters that are shown on the page are all girls. It shows that the drama revolves around the female gender. And the female gender is highlighted in the drama. The male-dominant social background is completely ignored by removing the image of a male person. The representation of all the young girls highlights that time has been changed. This is not the time when women had to depend on men in order to survive in society. Now that women are independent in society, they can live on their own.

The army uniform is a symbol of bravery, devotion, and love for the country. The girls in this uniform represent that they are now brave and are able to take part in the development of the country. Their style of standing and sitting is very catchy. They are looking very confident, and their facial expressions are also appreciable. Their heads are not down, which means they are not fearful of the male-dominated society and are proud of who they are. Their uniform, shoes, and hair styles show that they are well-disciplined. The background of the cover page has a mysterious look. It is not colorful as compared to other drama pages; it also shows that when a person starts to live for the country, he or she does not give much attention to other luxuries and colors of life.

The drama title is also very capturing, as it is new to hear. In our society, the word "Sinf-e-Nazuk" is used for women. "Sinf" means gender, while "Nazuk" means sensitive. "Sinf-e-Nazuk" denotes that the gender of women is weak and sensitive as compared to men. But in this drama, a different name is selected to change the minds of people in our society. "Sinf-e-Ahan" is used instead of "Sinf-e-Nazuk". 'Sinf' is the gender, and "Ahan" means iron. Here, women are considered as brave as iron, and they are no weaker and feebler. They are brave enough to face the society and survive in it on their own.

### Analysis 6



In this picture, there are a boy and two girls. The main focus on the image of the boy shows that the drama revolves around this character. The size of the image also represents that he is going to play the main lead role in the drama. The boy is wearing a white T-shirt, and the white color symbolizes spirituality and religion. He is wearing a black shirt on the white one, and the black color symbolizes darkness in life and also denotes the meaning of evil. The white color is shown in a very limited form, and black is more than white. It symbolizes that the boy may have some association with religion, but he is more attracted to evil. It shows that there is more space for evil in his life than for good. His facial expressions are serious and show the seriousness of his life.

On the other hand, there is a picture of the girl wearing a black dress, and the black color symbolizes the darkness of life. It also shows the absence of colors in life. She is wearing a black dress, which shows that she has no charm in her life. She has covered her head with "doppata" which shows that she is an introverted girl and is trying to save herself from society. Her serious facial expressions show her gloomy life. The background behind the girl's image shows a mosque, which is the symbol of religion and is considered a strong part of Islam. The sky is not blue over her head, which shows how she is suffering from her life. It means that she has a religious background and is also concerned about "Parda".

There is another girl who is wearing a colorful dress. Multi-colors show that she is having a colorful life. Her hairstyle denotes that she is an independent girl. The background behind her image is a blue sky and a city with big buildings. This particular background represents another aspect of society, which is materialism. There is a representation of modern man who is materialistic and captured by material things.

### 5. Conclusion

On the basis of the analysis, it can be concluded that semiotic analysis is very helpful for studying the different layers of meaning hidden in the pictures, designs, graphs, etc. The researcher conducted the semiotic analysis in order to understand the depth of meanings, and it enhanced the interest of people when they were able to go beyond the cover.

The research was conducted in order to answer the research questions. The results of the research showed that Pakistani drama cover pages had different layers of meaning when their semiotic analysis was conducted. They were deep in meaning, and a layman cannot understand the whole pack of meanings of the cover pages until he or she is able to conduct the semiotic analysis.

There was representation of different aspects of society, like social, cultural, religious, moral, etc. Different kinds of ideologies were also investigated with the help of semiotic analysis. The designer of the cover pages tried to convey the information through the cover pages. Each and every thing on the cover page participated in conveying the meanings. The items were added for specific purposes. The scheme of colors represented different shades of life that the characters of the drama are going to face. Size was also analyzed to show the intensity and importance of the things. The dresses, styles, and expressions were also meaningful when the semiotic analysis of them was conducted. The backgrounds of the cover pages were also analyzed to investigate what kind of meanings they were denoting. Each aspect of the cover pages was analyzed in terms of semiotics and the researcher was able to feel the beauty of hidden meanings.

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