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How Animal Abuse E-Posters Communicate Messages: A Study of Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs

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Abstract

This study analyzes the verbal and non-verbal signs in five animal-abuse awareness e-posters using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory of denotation and connotation. The posters focus on wildlife affected by wildfires, animal rights, chained dogs, animal cruelty awareness, and legal punishment for animal abuse. Charles Sanders Peirce's classification of signs (icon, index, symbol) and Cerrato's color theory are applied as supporting analytical frameworks. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected from five Facebook e-posters published by animal welfare organizations. The findings show that verbal signs, such as slogans and messages, and non-verbal signs, including images, colors, and symbols, work together to convey animal welfare messages. At the denotative level, the posters depict animal suffering and protection issues, while at the connotative level they communicate meanings related to empathy, responsibility, and justice. This study contributes to semiotic research by specifically focusing on animal-abuse awareness e-posters, an underexplored campaign type, and demonstrates how verbal and visual signs are designed to construct meaning in digital awareness campaigns.

1. Introduction

Visual communication has become one of the most influential means of conveying social messages in contemporary society. Beyond the use of language alone, communication increasingly relies on the interaction between verbal and visual elements to attract attention, evoke emotions, and shape audience interpretation. In modern media, meaning is rarely communicated through isolated linguistic expressions; rather, it is constructed through a combination of written language, images, colors, symbols, and other visual signs.

This multimodal nature of communication has attracted considerable attention from scholars in linguistics and semiotics, who argue that signs operate not merely as carriers of information but also as cultural and ideological resources through which meaning is produced and interpreted (Saussure, 1983; Barthes, 1977). Among various forms of visual communication, posters represent a particularly effective medium because they combine textual and visual elements to deliver messages quickly and persuasively. Through the interaction of verbal and non-verbal signs, posters are capable of influencing attitudes, raising awareness, and encouraging social action. Likewise, Trinadi et al. (2022) argue that visual communication becomes more effective when verbal signs, such as written and spoken language, are combined with non-verbal signs, including images, colors, and symbols, to communicate messages and persuade audiences.

The relationship between language and meaning has long been recognized as a central concern of semantics and semiotics. While semantics focuses on the study of meaning in language, semiotics extends this concern to all sign systems operating in social life. According to Barthes (1977), signs contain different levels of meaning that allow audiences to interpret messages beyond their literal forms. He distinguishes between denotation, which refers to the direct and literal meaning of a sign, and connotation, which represents the emotional, cultural, and ideological meanings associated with that sign. In addition, Peirce (1991) classifies signs into three categories: icon, index, and symbol. Consequently, the interpretation of visual texts requires attention not only to written language but also to the visual and symbolic elements that contribute to the construction of meaning.

In today's digital era, the role of verbal and non-verbal signs has become increasingly significant in shaping audience understanding and emotional responses. Verbal signs, such as slogans, captions, and written messages, help provide explicit information and guide interpretation, while non-verbal signs, including images, colors, facial expressions, gestures, and visual composition, communicate symbolic and emotional meanings. The interaction between these two types of signs creates a more effective communication process because audiences often interpret messages through both linguistic and visual elements simultaneously.

As argued by Putra and Juniartha (2020), verbal and non-verbal signs function as complementary components that strengthen meaning construction and audience engagement. Their study also highlights that non-verbal signs frequently play a dominant role in attracting attention and conveying emotional and cultural messages, while verbal signs serve to reinforce and clarify the intended meaning. Similarly, Trinadi et al. (2022) found that verbal and non-verbal signs in advertisements complement one another in conveying both denotative and connotative meanings, thereby educating, persuading, and strengthening audience awareness through meaningful verbal expressions and attractive visual illustrations.

Among the various types of posters used in contemporary society, animal abuse awareness posters occupy a distinctive position because they address moral and humanitarian issues related to animal welfare. Animal abuse remains a significant global concern involving physical violence, neglect, abandonment, and exploitation of animals. Animal abuse, involving physical violence, neglect, abandonment, and exploitation of animals, has been documented as a persistent concern by international animal welfare organizations (World Animal Protection, 2023; Humane Society International, 2022).

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Numerous organizations and campaign groups employ posters as educational tools to promote empathy and encourage public participation in preventing animal cruelty.

These posters frequently depict injured animals, sorrowful expressions, and symbolic visual elements accompanied by short persuasive slogans designed to create emotional engagement among viewers. The effectiveness of these campaigns depends largely on the interaction between verbal and non-verbal signs. Images of suffering animals may evoke sympathy and sadness, whereas colors such as red and black may symbolize danger, violence, and seriousness. At the same time, verbal expressions such as *"Stop Animal Cruelty"* or *"Their Voice Needs Your Help"* provide explicit messages that reinforce the intended meaning of the campaign. Through this combination, animal abuse posters produce both literal and implied meanings that influence audience perception and encourage social awareness. As demonstrated by Trinadi et al. (2022), the integration of verbal and non-verbal signs enables visual media to educate audiences, reinforce campaign messages, and persuade viewers to adopt more responsible attitudes and behaviours.

Previous studies have examined verbal and non-verbal signs in various forms of visual media. Trinadi et al. (2022) analyzed verbal and non-verbal signs in the *AQUA Life: Care for Nature, Nature Cares for You* advertisement and found that written language, images, colors, and symbols worked together to construct denotative and connotative meanings while persuading audiences to develop greater environmental awareness. Andriani and Marantika (2024) analyzed harassment awareness posters and found that visual elements, particularly images and colors, played a dominant role in attracting attention and producing emotional responses. Wati et al. (2023) investigated verbal and non-verbal signs in movie posters and demonstrated that textual and visual elements contribute significantly to symbolic and emotional meanings. Agastya et al. (2024) examined advertisement media and reported that visual signs are important in influencing audience perception and strengthening persuasive messages.

Similarly, Trisnayanti et al. (2021) analyzed COVID-19 advertisements and concluded that verbal and non-verbal signs contain both explicit and implicit meanings that contribute to public awareness. Collectively, these studies indicate that the interaction between verbal and non-verbal signs constitutes an important mechanism in constructing meaning within visual communication.

This study adopts Roland Barthes' (1977) theory of denotation and connotation as the primary analytical framework because it allows for systematic interpretation of both literal and symbolic meanings in visual texts. Peirce's (1991) classification of signs (icon, index, symbol) is employed as a supplementary framework to categorize non-verbal signs based on their relationship to their objects. Additionally, Cerrato's (2012) theory of color meaning is used to support the interpretation of emotional and symbolic functions of colors in the posters

However, previous studies have primarily focused on advertisements, movie posters, and public awareness campaigns related to health, environmental, and harassment issues, leaving animal abuse posters relatively unexplored as an object of semiotic inquiry. Animal abuse is a serious social issue that includes acts of physical violence, neglect, abandonment, and exploitation of animals. Such actions not only cause suffering to animals but also raise ethical concerns regarding human responsibility toward living creatures. To address this problem, many animal welfare organizations use

awareness campaigns to educate the public about the importance of treating animals with care, compassion, and respect. Through visual media such as e-posters, these campaigns aim to increase public awareness, encourage empathy, promote responsible behaviour, and inspire people to take action against animal cruelty. The general message conveyed by animal abuse awareness campaigns is that animals are living beings capable of feeling pain and therefore deserve protection and humane treatment.

However, previous studies have primarily focused on advertisements, movie posters, and public awareness campaigns related to health, environmental, and harassment issues, leaving animal abuse posters relatively unexplored as an object of semiotic inquiry. While previous studies have applied Barthes' framework to commercial advertisements, health campaigns, and environmental posters, no study has systematically examined how denotative and connotative meanings are constructed specifically in animal-abuse awareness e-posters. This gap is significant because animal welfare campaigns employ distinct persuasive strategies—combining emotional imagery of suffering animals with moral appeals and legal warnings—that differ from commercial or health-related visual communication. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by examining how verbal and non-verbal signs interact to construct meaning in this specific campaign context

Although animal abuse campaigns rely heavily on visual persuasion and emotional appeal, little attention has been devoted to investigating how verbal and non-verbal signs function together to produce denotative and connotative meanings within this specific context. Moreover, studies concerning animal welfare communication remain limited, particularly those employing Barthes' semiotic framework to explain how meanings are constructed and interpreted through visual texts. While Trinadi et al. (2022) successfully applied Barthes' theory to environmental advertising, their study focused on commercial environmental campaigns rather than awareness posters addressing animal welfare.

Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by conducting a qualitative semiotic analysis of selected animal abuse e-posters. Drawing upon Barthes' (1977) theory of denotation and connotation, as well as complementary concepts concerning color symbolism and sign classification, this study seeks to identify verbal and non-verbal signs and interpret their meanings in relation to the educational and persuasive purposes of animal welfare campaigns.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which, according to Creswell (2014), is appropriate for studies aiming to describe and interpret phenomena in their natural context without manipulating variables. The qualitative descriptive method is particularly suitable for the present study because the analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting verbal and non-verbal signs contained in visual texts. Rather than measuring statistical relationships, the study seeks to explain how meanings are constructed and communicated through signs found in animal abuse e-posters. This approach is consistent with the orientation of semiotic research, which emphasizes interpretation and description of symbolic phenomena occurring in authentic contexts.

The data source of this study consists of selected animal abuse e-posters collected from Facebook accounts associated with animal welfare organizations and awareness campaigns. Facebook was chosen because it provides various visual materials related to animal protection and public education concerning animal cruelty. The selected posters

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contain both verbal signs, such as slogans and written messages, and non-verbal signs, including images, colors, symbols, and layouts. Purposive sampling was employed because the posters were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and the clarity of the signs presented.

The following inclusion criteria were applied to guide the selection of e-posters: each poster must address issues related to animal abuse or animal welfare, contain both verbal signs (such as written text) and non-verbal signs (including images, colors, and symbols), be publicly accessible on Facebook, have an identifiable source and publication date, and possess sufficient visual quality to support detailed semiotic analysis. Five e-posters were selected for analysis because this number provides sufficient variation in campaign strategies (wildlife disaster, animal rights, chained dogs, activism, and legal punishment) while allowing for in-depth semiotic interpretation of each visual text. This sample size is consistent with previous semiotic studies of visual campaigns (Trinadi et al., 2022; Wati et al., 2023)

Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques. The process involved searching for animal abuse awareness posters, selecting posters containing clear verbal and non-verbal signs, downloading the selected posters, and organizing them systematically for analysis. Afterward, verbal signs, such as slogans and captions, and non-verbal signs, including images, colors, symbols, and facial expressions, were identified and classified according to their characteristics. All selected posters were published in English, which is the language of analysis. No translation was required.

Data analysis proceeded in several stages. First, the researcher identified the verbal and non-verbal signs contained in each poster. Second, the signs were categorized into verbal and non-verbal groups. Third, the denotative meanings were analyzed based on the literal representation of the signs. Fourth, the connotative meanings were interpreted based on cultural, emotional, and symbolic associations. In analyzing non-verbal signs, the researcher examined visual elements such as images, colors, facial expressions, gestures, typography, and layout.

Images were analyzed to identify what was visually represented in the poster, while colors were interpreted based on Cerrato's (2012) theory of color meaning to understand their emotional and symbolic functions. Furthermore, non-verbal signs were classified according to Peirce's theory as icons, indexes, or symbols. To enhance the credibility of interpretation, both authors independently analyzed the signs in each poster following the same analytical procedure. Disagreements in interpretation were discussed and resolved through consensus. This peer-checking procedure helps mitigate the subjectivity inherent in semiotic analysis.

Icons were identified as signs that visually resemble their objects, indexes as signs that have a direct or causal relationship with their objects, and symbols as signs whose meanings are determined by social convention or cultural agreement. Finally, the interaction between verbal and non-verbal signs was interpreted to explain how meaning is constructed and how the campaign messages are communicated. Roland Barthes' (1977) theory of denotation and connotation served as the primary analytical framework for the study, supported by Cerrato's (2012) theory of color meaning and Peirce's classification of signs.

3. Result

This study analyzed five animal abuse awareness e-posters collected from Facebook. The analysis focused on identifying verbal and non-verbal signs and interpreting their denotative and connotative meanings based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. In addition, Cerrato's theory of color meaning and Peirce's classification of signs were applied to support the interpretation of visual elements.

Table 1. The verbal and non-verbal signs of each poster

Poster	Theme	Verbal Sign	Non-Verbal Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Dominant Color(s)
1	Wildlife disaster	Prayer	Bear + fire/smoke	Bear in forest fire	Innocent wildlife suffering	Orange, red, black
2	Animal rights	Quotation	Monkey + collar	Restrained monkey	Exploitation, captivity	Gray, brown
3	Chained dogs	Statement	Dog + chain	Chained dog	Neglect, cruelty	Black
4	Anti-cruelty	Slogan	Dog silhouette	Urging action against cruelty	Activism, resistance	Black, white
5	Legal punishment	Warning	Dog + handcuffs	Dog with handcuffs	Legal accountability	Black, orange

The findings show that all five posters combine verbal and non-verbal signs to communicate messages related to animal welfare, animal rights, and the prevention of animal cruelty. Verbal signs appear in the form of slogans, statements, quotations, and persuasive messages, while non-verbal signs are represented through images of animals, colors, symbols, typography, and visual composition. The interaction between these elements creates both literal and symbolic meanings that encourage empathy and social awareness.

The first poster contains the verbal sign "May we pray for the poor animals suffering right now in California." The non-verbal signs include a bear surrounded by wildfire, smoke, and flames. At the denotative level, the poster depicts a bear trapped in a forest fire. At the connotative level, the bear symbolizes innocent wildlife suffering due to environmental disasters. The dominant orange, red, and black colors represent danger, destruction, fear, and suffering. According to Peirce's classification, the bear functions as an icon, while the flames and smoke serve as indexes indicating wildfire and danger. The act of prayer functions as a symbol of hope and compassion. Together, these signs encourage audiences to empathize with animals affected by environmental crises.

The second poster presents the quotation, "The greatest privilege that comes with freedom of speech is using your voice for those who don't have one." The visual image of a monkey wearing a metal collar serves as the primary non-verbal sign. Denotatively, the poster shows a restrained monkey accompanied by a message encouraging advocacy. Connotatively, the monkey represents animals that experience exploitation and loss of freedom, while the collar symbolizes oppression and human control.

The gray and brown color tones create a melancholic atmosphere and emphasize the animal's suffering. In Peirce's framework, the monkey and collar function as icons, whereas the collar also acts as an index of captivity. The quotation functions as a symbol

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of justice, advocacy, and moral responsibility. The poster therefore promotes the idea that humans should become protectors of vulnerable animals.

The third poster contains the statement "DON'T CHAIN ME. I AM YOUR BEST FRIEND." The image of a dog restrained by a heavy chain serves as the non-verbal sign. At the denotative level, the poster simply portrays a chained dog. However, at the connotative level, the chain symbolizes neglect, restriction, and cruelty. The phrase "best friend" highlights the emotional bond between humans and dogs and reminds viewers that companion animals deserve affection and freedom. The black background creates a serious atmosphere, while the natural colors of the dog emphasize innocence and vulnerability. Based on Peirce's theory, the dog and chain function as icons, whereas the chain also acts as an index of suffering and confinement. The phrase "best friend" serves as a symbol of loyalty and companionship. The combination of verbal and visual signs effectively encourages responsible pet ownership and humane treatment of animals.

The fourth poster uses the slogan "DON'T KEEP CALM. FIGHT AGAINST ANIMAL CRUELTY!!!" as its verbal sign. The non-verbal elements consist of bold black typography and a dog silhouette against a white background. Denotatively, the poster urges audiences to oppose animal cruelty. Connotatively, it promotes activism, resistance, and collective responsibility. The use of capital letters and exclamation marks signifies urgency and determination. The black color symbolizes authority and seriousness, while the white background represents hope and justice. The dog silhouette functions as an icon, and the typography acts as an index of urgency. The slogan itself functions as a symbol of social action and animal rights advocacy. Unlike the other posters, this design relies more heavily on language than emotional imagery, demonstrating that persuasive verbal messages can also be effective in awareness campaigns.

The fifth poster contains the statement "Abuse an animal, go to JAIL." The image of a dog wearing handcuffs around its neck functions as the main non-verbal sign. At the denotative level, the poster depicts a dog accompanied by a warning about imprisonment for animal abuse. Connotatively, the handcuffs symbolize legal punishment, accountability, and justice. The poster communicates that animal cruelty should be treated as a serious offense with legal consequences. The dominant black color emphasizes authority and seriousness, while the orange color conveys warning and urgency. According to Peirce's theory, the dog and handcuffs function as icons, while the handcuffs also serve as an index of criminal punishment. The word "JAIL" functions as a symbol of law enforcement and justice. Through these signs, the poster promotes legal awareness and social responsibility toward animal welfare.

Overall, the analysis reveals that the denotative meanings of the posters focus on literal representations of animals experiencing suffering, captivity, danger, or neglect. At the connotative level, the posters communicate broader themes such as compassion, responsibility, justice, environmental protection, animal rights, and collective action against cruelty. Furthermore, color symbolism plays an important role in strengthening emotional responses, while icons, indexes, and symbols help audiences interpret the intended messages. These findings demonstrate that verbal and non-verbal signs work together effectively to construct meaning and support animal welfare awareness campaigns.

4. Discussion

Data 1



Figure 1. E-Poster Raising Awareness of Animals Affected by Wildfires

Figure 1. (post: https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18W7qJz6Jn/?mibextid=wwXIfr) Was published on 13 Jan 2025,

The verbal sign in this poster is the sentence, *"May we pray for the poor animals suffering right now in California,"* which expresses sympathy and encourages people to show concern for animals affected by natural disasters. The non-verbal sign is represented by a bear sitting alone on a rock surrounded by wildfire, smoke, burning trees, and orange flames. According to Barthes' denotative level, the poster literally depicts a bear trapped in a forest fire while the text asks people to pray for animals suffering from the disaster in California.

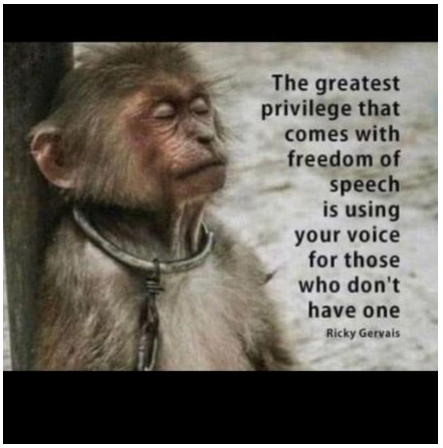
At the connotative level, the bear symbolizes innocent wildlife that becomes the victim of environmental destruction and climate-related disasters. The image conveys a message of empathy, compassion, and the importance of protecting wildlife and their habitats. Based on Cerrato's theory of color meaning, the dominant orange and red colors symbolize danger, destruction, emergency, and suffering, while the black smoke suggests death, fear, and hopelessness. The gray atmosphere further reinforces the sense of sadness and uncertainty. According to Peirce's semiotic classification, the bear functions as an icon because it directly represents a real animal, while the flames and smoke serve as indexes that indicate the presence of wildfire and danger. Meanwhile, the act of prayer functions as a symbol of hope, compassion, and collective responsibility toward living creatures affected by disasters. The verbal and visual signs work together to create an emotional appeal that encourages audiences to care about wildlife suffering caused by environmental crises.

This message is also relevant to the Indonesian context. Indonesia frequently experiences forest and land fires, particularly in Sumatra and Kalimantan, which have severe impacts on wildlife. Forest fires often destroy natural habitats and threaten endangered species such as orangutans, Sumatran tigers, and various bird species. During major fire incidents, many animals are forced to flee their habitats, suffer injuries, or die due to smoke and flames. Therefore, the poster not only reflects the situation in California but also raises awareness of similar environmental problems in Indonesia. Through its combination of verbal and non-verbal signs, the poster reminds audiences that wildlife are often the silent victims of environmental disasters and that humans share the responsibility to protect and preserve biodiversity.

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The message of this poster is particularly relevant to the Indonesian context. Indonesia frequently experiences forest and land fires, especially in Sumatra and Kalimantan, which have devastating impacts on wildlife (Varkkey, 2016; World Bank, 2020). These fires often destroy natural habitats and threaten endangered species such as orangutans, Sumatran tigers, and various bird species. During major fire incidents, many animals are forced to flee their habitats, suffer injuries, or die due to smoke and flames. Therefore, the poster not only reflects the situation in California but also raises awareness of similar environmental problems in Indonesia. Through its combination of verbal and non-verbal signs, the poster reminds audiences that wildlife are often the silent victims of environmental disasters and that humans share the responsibility to protect and preserve biodiversity.

Data 2



Figfiure 2. E-Poster Promoting Animal Rights and Protection

Figure 2. (post: https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17Cmq2UBYm/?mibextid=wwXIfr) was published on 10 August 2024

The verbal sign in this poster is the quotation, *"The greatest privilege that comes with freedom of speech is using your voice for those who don't have one."* The non-verbal sign is represented by a monkey wearing a metal collar with its eyes closed. According to Barthes' denotative meaning, the poster literally depicts a restrained monkey accompanied by a message encouraging people to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. At the connotative level, the monkey symbolizes animals that are exploited, neglected, and deprived of their freedom by humans. The metal collar signifies captivity, control, and oppression, suggesting that animals often become victims of human actions without having the ability to defend themselves. Through this combination of verbal and visual signs, the poster encourages viewers to become advocates for animal welfare and to use their voices to protect vulnerable animals from abuse and exploitation.

Based on Cerrato's theory of color meaning, the dominant gray and brown colors create a serious, melancholic, and sorrowful atmosphere. These colors emphasize the monkey's suffering, helplessness, and loss of freedom.

The muted color palette also strengthens the emotional impact of the poster by directing the audience's attention to the animal's condition rather than distracting visual elements.

According to Peirce's semiotic theory, the monkey and the metal collar function as icons because they visually resemble real objects. The collar also serves as an index because it indicates captivity, restriction, and human control over animals. Meanwhile, the quotation functions as a symbol because its meaning is culturally understood as representing advocacy, justice, responsibility, and the ethical obligation to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

The verbal and visual elements work together to create a powerful message about animal rights and human responsibility. Barthes' connotative analysis reveals that the monkey does not merely represent a single animal but symbolizes all animals that experience exploitation and suffering due to human activities. The poster encourages audiences to recognize their role as protectors of animals and to actively oppose practices that cause harm and injustice. Unlike posters that focus on physical abuse, this poster emphasizes the broader issue of animal exploitation and the moral responsibility of society to advocate for animal welfare.

In the Indonesian context, the message of this poster is particularly relevant because monkeys have historically been exploited in entertainment practices such as *topeng monyet* (performing monkey shows). In this practice, monkeys are often trained through harsh methods and forced to perform unnatural acts for public entertainment while wearing chains, collars, or restrictive equipment. Animal welfare organizations and government agencies have repeatedly raised concerns about the physical and psychological suffering experienced by these animals.

Although efforts have been made to reduce and prohibit *topeng monyet* performances in several regions, cases of animal exploitation for entertainment and commercial purposes continue to occur. Therefore, the image of the collared monkey serves as a reminder of the reality faced by many animals that are deprived of their freedom for human benefit. Through its combination of a persuasive quotation, symbolic imagery, and somber colors, the poster effectively promotes awareness of animal rights, encourages empathy toward exploited animals, and calls upon society to become a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves.

In the Indonesian context, the message of this poster is particularly relevant because monkeys have historically been exploited in entertainment practices such as *topeng monyet* (performing monkey shows) (Hadad, 2018). In this practice, monkeys are often trained through harsh methods and forced to perform unnatural acts for public entertainment while wearing chains, collars, or restrictive equipment. Animal welfare organizations and government agencies have repeatedly raised concerns about the physical and psychological suffering experienced by these animals (Satwa, 2022).

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Data 3



Figure 3. Anti-Animal Cruelty E-Poster on Chained Dogs

Figure 3. (post: https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18u3CBntYR/?mibextid=wwXIfr) Was published on 3 January 2025

The verbal sign in this poster is the statement, *"DON'T CHAIN ME. I AM YOUR BEST FRIEND,"* which directly addresses the audience and urges them not to confine or mistreat dogs. The non-verbal sign is represented by a dog tied with a heavy chain, standing in an outdoor environment. At the denotative level, according to Barthes, the poster simply shows a chained dog asking not to be restrained. However, at the connotative level, the chain symbolizes neglect, restriction, and animal cruelty. The phrase *"I am your best friend"* emphasizes the close relationship between humans and dogs, reminding viewers that dogs are loyal companions who deserve care, affection, and freedom rather than suffering. Through this combination of text and image, the poster creates an emotional appeal that encourages responsible treatment of animals.

Based on Cerrato's theory of color meaning, the black background conveys seriousness, sadness, and concern, drawing attention to the issue of animal abuse. Meanwhile, the natural colors of the dog and its surroundings emphasize the animal's vulnerability and innocence. According to Peirce's semiotic theory, the dog and the chain function as icons because they visually resemble real objects. The chain serves as an index of restriction and suffering because it indicates that the dog's movement and freedom are limited. Furthermore, the phrase *"best friend"* functions as a symbol of loyalty, companionship, and the emotional bond between humans and dogs. The interaction between the verbal and visual signs strengthens the poster's message that animals should not be treated as objects but as living beings that deserve respect and proper care.

This message is particularly relevant in the context of Bali, where dogs play an important role in many communities as companions, guardians, and even cultural symbols. Despite this, cases of neglected and chained dogs can still be found in some areas. Animal welfare organizations in Bali have reported concerns regarding dogs being continuously chained, deprived of adequate shelter, exercise, and social interaction. Such treatment can lead to physical injuries, stress, fear, and aggressive behavior. In addition, Bali has received international attention for its efforts to improve animal welfare through rescue programs and public education campaigns aimed at promoting responsible pet ownership.

Therefore, the poster serves as a reminder to Balinese society that keeping dogs should involve proper care, adequate living conditions, and freedom of movement. By portraying a chained dog alongside an emotional statement, the poster encourages people to reflect on their responsibilities toward animals and to treat them with compassion and respect.

This message is particularly relevant in the context of Bali, where dogs play an important role in many communities as companions, guardians, and even cultural symbols. Despite this, cases of neglected and chained dogs can still be found in some areas. Animal welfare organizations in Bali have reported concerns regarding dogs being continuously chained, deprived of adequate shelter, exercise, and social interaction (Bali Animal Welfare Association, 2023). Such treatment can lead to physical injuries, stress, fear, and aggressive behavior. In addition, Bali has received international attention for its efforts to improve animal welfare through rescue programs and public education campaigns aimed at promoting responsible pet ownership.

Therefore, the poster serves as a reminder to Balinese society that keeping dogs should involve proper care, adequate living conditions, and freedom of movement. By portraying a chained dog alongside an emotional statement, the poster encourages people to reflect on their responsibilities toward animals and to treat them with compassion and respect.

Data 4



Figure 4. Animal Cruelty Awareness E-Poster

Figure 4. (post: https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1F1K9v3UNU/?mibextid=wwXIfr)Was published on 22 February 2025

The verbal sign in this poster is the slogan *"DON'T KEEP CALM. FIGHT AGAINST ANIMAL CRUELTY!!!"* The non-verbal sign consists of bold black typography accompanied by a dog silhouette displayed on a white background. According to Barthes' denotative meaning, the poster directly urges people not to remain passive when witnessing animal cruelty and encourages them to take action against animal abuse. At the connotative level, the slogan conveys a stronger message of activism, resistance, and collective responsibility. The use of large capital letters and multiple exclamation marks symbolizes urgency, determination, and the need for immediate action. Rather than merely informing the audience about animal abuse, the poster motivates individuals to become actively involved in preventing cruelty and defending animal welfare.

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Based on Cerrato's theory of color meaning, the dominant black color symbolizes authority, seriousness, strength, and determination, while the white background represents justice, honesty, and hope for a better future for animals. The contrast between black and white creates a clear and powerful visual impact that helps emphasize the message. According to Peirce's semiotic theory, the dog silhouette functions as an icon because it visually represents an actual animal. The bold capital letters serve as an index of urgency and emotional intensity, indicating that animal cruelty is a serious issue that requires immediate attention. Meanwhile, the slogan itself functions as a symbol because its meaning is understood through social conventions and shared values regarding animal rights and protection.

Unlike the previous posters that rely heavily on emotional images of suffering animals, this poster uses typography as its primary persuasive strategy. The simplicity of the design allows the verbal message to become the central focus, making it direct, memorable, and easy to understand. This approach reflects the idea that awareness campaigns do not always need graphic or emotional imagery to influence public attitudes; strong language can also be an effective tool for social advocacy. In the Indonesian context, the message is highly relevant because cases of animal cruelty continue to occur in various forms, including neglect, abandonment, illegal wildlife trade, and physical abuse of domestic animals.

Reports from animal welfare organizations and media coverage have highlighted incidents involving abused dogs, cats, and protected wildlife, which have generated public concern and calls for stronger legal protection. Therefore, the poster encourages Indonesian society not only to sympathize with animals but also to actively report abuse, support animal welfare organizations, and participate in efforts to create a more humane environment. Through its combination of persuasive language, simple visual elements, and symbolic colors, the poster effectively promotes social awareness and collective action against animal cruelty.

In the Indonesian context, the message is highly relevant because cases of animal cruelty continue to occur in various forms, including neglect, abandonment, illegal wildlife trade, and physical abuse of domestic animals. Reports from animal welfare organizations and media coverage have highlighted incidents involving abused dogs, cats, and protected wildlife, which have generated public concern and calls for stronger legal protection (Satwa, 2022). Public concern regarding animal welfare has increased in recent years, especially following viral cases of abuse shared through social media. Therefore, the poster encourages Indonesian society not only to sympathize with animals but also to actively report abuse, support animal welfare organizations, and participate in efforts to create a more humane environment. Through its combination of persuasive language, simple visual elements, and symbolic colors, the poster effectively promotes social awareness and collective action against animal cruelty.

Data 5



Figure 5. E-Poster Depicting Animal Abuse as a Criminal Offense

Figure 5. (post: https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18wfWUvUAc/?mibextid=wwXIfr) was published on 7 August 2024

The verbal sign in this poster is the statement *"Abuse an animal, go to JAIL."* The non-verbal sign is represented by a black dog with handcuffs hanging around its neck. According to Barthes' denotative meaning, the poster literally depicts a dog wearing handcuffs while displaying a warning that individuals who abuse animals should be imprisoned. At the connotative level, the handcuffs symbolize legal punishment, accountability, and justice for animals that become victims of abuse. The poster conveys the idea that animal cruelty is not merely an unethical act but also a violation of the law that deserves serious consequences. By connecting the image of an innocent dog with symbols of criminal punishment, the poster seeks to discourage abusive behavior and encourage respect for animal welfare.

Based on Cerrato's theory of color meaning, the dominant black color symbolizes authority, seriousness, and power, emphasizing the gravity of animal abuse cases. Meanwhile, the orange border surrounding the text attracts attention and conveys warning, urgency, and alertness. The contrast between these colors strengthens the poster's persuasive impact and directs viewers' focus to the legal message presented. According to Peirce's semiotic theory, the dog and handcuffs function as icons because they visually resemble real objects. The handcuffs also serve as an index because they directly indicate criminal punishment and legal consequences. Furthermore, the word *"JAIL"* functions as a symbol since its meaning is socially and culturally understood as representing law enforcement, justice, and punishment for wrongdoing.

Unlike posters that primarily rely on emotional appeals, this poster adopts a more authoritative approach by emphasizing legal accountability. The combination of strong language and visual symbolism makes the message direct and difficult to ignore. Barthes' connotative analysis reveals that the poster promotes the idea of justice for animals and reinforces the belief that society has a responsibility to protect vulnerable living beings from harm. In the Indonesian context, this message is particularly relevant because animal abuse remains a significant issue.

Cases of neglect, abandonment, illegal wildlife trade, and physical violence against animals continue to be reported in various regions of Indonesia. Public concern regarding animal welfare has increased in recent years, especially following viral cases of abuse shared through social media. Consequently, this poster serves not only as a warning to potential offenders but also as an educational tool that encourages the public to recognize animal cruelty as a serious social issue. Through its integration of verbal and visual signs,

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the poster effectively communicates the importance of legal responsibility, animal protection, and social justice.

In the Indonesian context, this message is particularly relevant because animal abuse remains a significant issue. Cases of neglect, abandonment, illegal wildlife trade, and physical violence against animals continue to be reported in various regions of Indonesia (Satwa, 2022). Public concern regarding animal welfare has increased in recent years, especially following viral cases of abuse shared through social media. Consequently, this poster serves not only as a warning to potential offenders but also as an educational tool that encourages the public to recognize animal cruelty as a serious social issue. Through its integration of verbal and visual signs, the poster effectively communicates the importance of legal responsibility, animal protection, and social justice.

Multimodal Interaction Between Verbal and Non-Verbal Signs

The interaction between verbal and non-verbal signs in these posters can be further understood through Barthes' (1977) concepts of anchorage and relay. Anchorage occurs when verbal text guides the viewer's interpretation of an image. In Poster 1, the text "May we pray for the poor animals suffering right now in California" anchors the image of the bear by specifying that the viewer should feel sympathy and pray. Without the text, the bear could be interpreted as a wildlife documentary image; with the text, it becomes an explicit call for compassion.

In Poster 3, the relationship between text and image functions as relay because neither element fully explains the other. The image of the chained dog shows suffering, but the text "Don't chain me. I am your best friend" adds the relational dimension of betrayal—a companion animal being mistreated by its human partner. The visual and verbal components jointly produce meaning that neither could achieve independently.

In Posters 4 and 5, the verbal text anchors the visual image by providing specific interpretive guidance. The slogan "Don't keep calm. Fight against animal cruelty" anchors the dog silhouette by transforming a neutral animal image into a call for activism. Similarly, the warning "Abuse an animal, go to JAIL" anchors the image of the dog with handcuffs by specifying that the handcuffs represent legal punishment rather than merely captivity.

At the mythic level, these posters collectively construct the ideology that humans have a moral obligation to protect vulnerable animals. The recurring representation of animals as innocent, voiceless victims positions humans as potential heroes or protectors. This myth legitimizes animal welfare activism as a moral responsibility rather than merely a personal choice. The consistent use of animal images showing suffering, captivity, or innocence reinforces the ideological position that animals are dependent on human protection and that animal welfare is a human responsibility.

This study's finding that non-verbal signs play a dominant role in attracting attention and conveying emotional meanings aligns with Andriani and Marantika's (2024) analysis of harassment awareness posters, which found that visual elements, particularly images and colors, play a dominant role in producing emotional responses. However, unlike commercial advertisements analyzed by Trinadi et al. (2022), which used aspirational imagery to promote environmental awareness, animal-abuse posters employ images of vulnerability and suffering rather than idealized imagery. This difference

reflects the distinct persuasive purpose of social advocacy campaigns compared to commercial advertising.

The emphasis on emotional appeal through images of suffering animals is similar to environmental campaigns that depict the consequences of pollution or deforestation, as analyzed by Trinadi et al. (2022). However, animal-abuse posters differ in their use of legal warnings and advocacy messages, which are less common in environmental campaigns. The presence of legal punishment themes in Poster 5 represents a distinct persuasive strategy not observed in previous semiotic studies of public awareness campaigns.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the verbal and non-verbal signs found in animal abuse awareness e-posters and to analyze their denotative and connotative meanings using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. Based on the analysis of five selected e-posters, it can be concluded that both verbal and non-verbal signs play significant roles in communicating messages related to animal welfare and the prevention of animal cruelty.

The verbal signs identified in the posters appear in the form of prayers, quotations, slogans, persuasive statements, and warnings. These verbal signs function to express sympathy, encourage public awareness, persuade audiences to protect animals, promote social responsibility, and emphasize the consequences of animal abuse. Through emotional and persuasive language, the verbal signs guide audiences toward a deeper understanding of animal welfare issues and motivate them to take positive action.

The non-verbal signs consist of images of animals, chains, collars, handcuffs, flames, smoke, typography, visual composition, and color elements. At the denotative level, these signs present literal representations of animals experiencing danger, captivity, neglect, or suffering. At the connotative level, they communicate broader meanings related to compassion, justice, responsibility, environmental protection, freedom, and animal rights. The analysis also reveals that colors play an important role in strengthening emotional responses. Red and orange symbolize danger and urgency, black represents seriousness and authority, gray conveys sadness and hopelessness, while white symbolizes hope and justice.

Furthermore, the application of Peirce's classification demonstrates that the posters contain icons, indexes, and symbols that contribute to the construction of meaning. Animal images function primarily as icons, objects such as chains, smoke, and handcuffs function as indexes of suffering and abuse, while slogans, prayers, and legal expressions function as symbols representing social and moral values.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the interaction between verbal and non-verbal signs effectively constructs persuasive messages that raise public awareness of animal abuse. The selected e-posters not only provide information about animal welfare issues but also evoke emotional responses, encourage empathy, and inspire audiences to participate in efforts to prevent animal cruelty. Therefore, semiotic analysis offers a valuable approach for understanding how visual communication campaigns create meaning and influence public attitudes toward animal welfare. This study also contributes to the development of semiotic studies, particularly in the field of animal welfare communication and social awareness campaigns.

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