

# Digital Literacy Advocacy Reflection in Movie Poster “Missing” (2023)

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## Article

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## Abstract

*Posters are an advertising medium, showcasing captivating images and incorporating information and symbols to capture the audience's attention. The study aims to analyze the semiotics of the 'Missing' (2023) movie posters and explore how these semiotic meanings relate to the needs of digital literacy advocacy. The focus of the study centers on the film poster for Missing (2023), specifically analyzing one of the three official IMDb advertisements for the movie. The study uses documentary analysis techniques grounded in Ferdinand De Saussure's theory of signification to interpret the semiotics of the posters. The 'Missing' (2023) poster illustrates various aspects of digitalization through its visual elements. The poster aims to captivate viewers and pique their interest in the film. The visual elements in the illustration category, highlighting digitalization, incorporate screenshots of devices and laptops. Additionally, the poster frequently highlights the second aspect of digital literacy advocacy, highlighting the development of interconnected skills and competencies essential for the digital era.*

**Keywords:** digital literacy advocacy, movie poster, semiotic analysis

## Abstrak

Poster merupakan media periklanan, menampilkan gambar-gambar menawan serta menyertakan informasi dan simbol untuk menarik perhatian audiens. Penelitian bertujuan untuk menganalisis semiotika poster film 'Missing' (2023) dan menelusuri bagaimana makna semiotika tersebut berhubungan dengan kebutuhan advokasi literasi digital. Fokus kajian berpusat pada poster film Missing (2023), khususnya menganalisis salah satu dari tiga iklan resmi IMDb untuk film tersebut. Kajian ini menggunakan teknik analisis dokumenter yang berlandaskan teori signifikansi Ferdinand De Saussure untuk menafsirkan semiotika poster. Poster 'Missing' (2023) menggambarkan berbagai aspek digitalisasi melalui elemen visualnya. Poster tersebut bertujuan untuk memikat penonton dan membangkitkan minat mereka terhadap film tersebut. Elemen visual dalam kategori ilustrasi, menonjolkan digitalisasi, menyertakan tangkapan layar perangkat dan laptop. Selain itu, poster tersebut sering menyoroti aspek kedua dari advokasi literasi digital, yang menyoroti pengembangan keterampilan dan kompetensi yang saling berhubungan yang penting untuk era digital.

**Kata Kunci:** advokasi literasi digital, analisis semiotika, poster film

## INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving world, digital technologies are embedded in almost every aspect of daily life. The concept of digital literacy is increasingly vital, not merely as a technical skill, but as a defining feature of modern existence. Navigating the intricate web of digital information, critically evaluating sources, and engaging in creative digital expression are now fundamental requirements for individuals (Lankshear & Knobel, 2015; Bawden, 2008)). Digital literacy extends beyond academic domains—it is central to everyday participation, social interaction, and citizenship (Legi et al., 2023).

The growing prevalence of digital information raises concerns regarding misinformation, manipulation, and the authenticity of online content. In response, digital literacy advocacy has become

a global priority (Nuraeni et al., 2022); Humaira, 2022). This study explores how advocacy for digital literacy is communicated through visual media, using the movie poster for *Missing* (2023) as a focal point. The *Missing* poster presents a rich site for semiotic analysis, encapsulating themes of information seeking, digital interface, and the complexities of digital environments. As part of a film anthology—following *Searching* (2018) and inspired by *Run* (2020)—*Missing* (2023) employs visual strategies that mirror real-world digital challenges, notably the search for truth and the reliance on digital tools in critical situations.

Film posters, as visual communication artifacts, play an essential role in shaping public perceptions and influencing audience decisions. Hackley (2005) describes movie posters as promotional tools that rely heavily on visuals to capture attention. Posters leverage elements such as images, signs, symbols, color, and typography to convey layered messages (Murchie & Diomedes, 2020; Fitaloka et al., 2023; Lewis, 2021). These visual elements, often supported by verbal cues (Supriyono, 2010; Chandler, 2003), communicate both overt and covert meanings, allowing audiences to interpret messages according to their own contexts.

The significance of film posters extends beyond advertising. Posters can serve as advocacy tools by embedding messages relevant to current societal issues, such as digital literacy. Their semiotic features—visual and verbal signs, connotations, denotations—invite audiences to read and interpret meanings beyond the surface (Saussure, 2011; Diniati & Pratiwi, 2018). As Putra & Diniati (2019) argue, every sign in visual media shapes perceptions and influences attitudes. The *Missing* poster, with its depiction of a protagonist using digital tools to solve a personal crisis, symbolically highlights the importance of digital literacy in contemporary life.

Previous research reinforces the importance of digital literacy as both a protective and empowering skill. Legi et al., (2023), emphasize that in the era of Society 5.0, scientific and technological literacy is foundational for navigating rapid advancements. Nuraeni et al., (2022) present data from the Indonesian Digital Literacy Index, revealing notable gaps between urban and rural communities—underscoring the urgent need for widespread advocacy. Humaira (2022) reports that rural areas in Indonesia exhibit a slightly higher digital literacy index than urban areas, though both remain below optimal levels. This gap necessitates effective communication strategies to promote digital literacy across diverse populations.

Scholars have advanced multiple frameworks to conceptualize digital literacy. Wang et al., (2012) introduced the notion of "digital natives," though subsequent research found that early exposure to technology does not guarantee critical skills, and factors such as demographics and socio-cultural context also play a role. Lankshear & Knobel (2015) and Bawden (2008) detail core competencies, including reading multimedia, information assembly, collaborative communication, and critical evaluation. Eshet-Alkalai (2004) and Van Laar et al., (2017) offer further models, incorporating literacies such as reproduction, information, photovisual, socio-emotional, and branching skills, as well as cognitive and contextual abilities.

The sociocultural perspective frames digital literacy as a socially situated practice, focusing on participation, creation, and negotiation in online communities (Lankshear & Knobel, 2015). In this context, popular media—such as movies and their promotional materials—can significantly shape digital attitudes and behaviors. Research by Putri & Hersinta (2024) found that documentary films enhance digital literacy awareness through narrative and visual storytelling, while highlighting the importance of media reception in audience understanding.

Despite the rich literature on digital literacy, research that specifically connects semiotic analysis of film posters to digital literacy advocacy remains limited. While posters are a pervasive part of digital culture and influential in public communication, their potential as media for digital literacy advocacy has not been thoroughly examined, especially within the Indonesian context.

Based on the above, this study aims to analyze the semiotic meanings in the 'Missing' (2023) movie poster and examine how these meanings reflect the advocacy of digital literacy. The research

addresses the following problem: How do the visual and verbal elements in the 'Missing' movie poster construct messages that advocate for digital literacy?

The urgency of this study lies in its potential to provide new insights into the intersection between semiotics and digital literacy in popular media. By understanding how signs, codes, and conventions in visual texts contribute to digital literacy advocacy, this research seeks to strengthen the role of media analysis in promoting critical digital skills. The results are expected to benefit scholars, educators, and practitioners seeking to harness the persuasive power of visual media in fostering a digitally literate society.

## METHOD

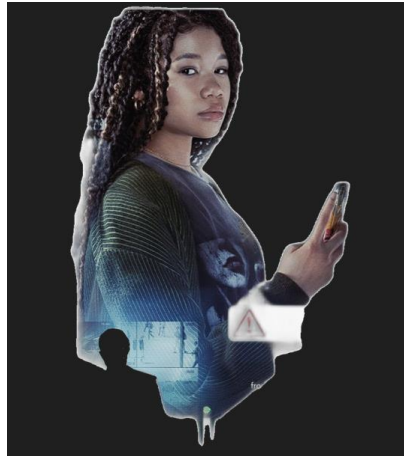
This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the semiotic meanings in the 'Missing' movie poster. The main data source is a selected official poster of 'Missing' (2023), which prominently features the main female character using a smartphone. Both visual and textual elements of the poster serve as the primary data.

The analysis is conducted using Saussure's semiotic theory, which distinguishes between the signifier (the physical form, such as images, colors, and text) and the signified (the concept or meaning behind the sign) (Saussure, 2011). The research procedure involves several systematic steps:

(1) Data Collection: The researcher identifies and collects the main poster image from official sources (IMDb). The selected poster is examined as a visual text, focusing on its compositional elements; (2) Identification of Signs: The poster is analyzed by identifying all significant visual and verbal elements that act as signs. These include images, colors, typography, symbols, taglines, and other graphic features (Supriyono, 2010; Chandler, 2003); (3) Semiotic Analysis – Saussurean Procedure: Each element is categorized into signifier (physical form) and signified (meaning/concept). The analysis proceeds to distinguish denotative meanings (literal, surface meaning) and connotative meanings (implied, cultural, or emotional meaning) for each sign (Saussure, 2011; Diniati & Pratiwi, 2018). The relation between signs is interpreted in the context of digital literacy advocacy; (4) Interpretation & Contextualization: The researcher interprets how the combination of signifiers and signifieds in the poster reflects messages about digital literacy, considering visual storytelling and contemporary digital issues (Putra & Diniati, 2019); (5) Data Validity: To ensure validity, the interpretation of visual signs is triangulated with relevant literature on semiotics, film studies, and digital literacy. Contextual references from the 'Missing' movie and supporting studies are used to check consistency and strengthen the analysis (Mukhtar, 2013). All steps above are documented systematically to provide transparency and traceability in the analysis process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study aims to identify and analyze the signs in one of the three 'Missing' (2023) movie posters listed on IMDb, focusing on those illustrating Digital Literacy Advocacy (DLA), and to discuss these signs.



**Figure 1.** The poster depicts a woman who looks anxious, as shown in the visual elements  
Source: IMDb (2023)

The first visual element analyzed is the main character's expression while holding a smartphone. This facial expression becomes a significant entry point for interpreting the psychological and emotional states depicted in the poster. The following table presents the semiotic analysis:

**Table 1.** The Main Character's Expression in the 'Missing' (2023) Movie Poster

| Visual Element                                                                    | Signifier                                                                                                                                                          | Signified                                                                                                                   | Connotation (Digital Literacy)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Main character with anxious expression holding phone; blue-dominated color scheme | Young woman, braided hair, turning sideways, anxious facial cues (raised eyebrows, lowered eyelids, tense mouth), holding a smartphone; predominance of blue tones | Psychological state: anxiety, worry, vigilance; emotional urgency in digital context; search for information and connection | Represents the psychological and social urgency to seek information through digital means; highlights the dependence on digital tools for communication and problem-solving; demonstrates how color and expression amplify digital advocacy messages (Putra & Diniati, 2019; Kohler et al., 2004; Saussure, 2011; Chandler, 2003; Wang et al., 2012) |

Source: Author's analysis, adapted from Saussure (2011), Chandler (2003), Putra & Diniati (2019), Kohler et al., (2004), Wang et al., (2012), Nuran (2016)

The poster presents a young woman with clear signs of anxiety—her posture, facial tension, and worried glances as she holds her smartphone serve as a powerful visual entry point into the narrative of *Missing* (2023). According to Nuran (2016), illustration provides narrative cues, while Kohler et al., (2004) identify facial features that signify sadness and anxiety, all of which are visually evident in the poster. The predominance of blue in the background and her clothing is not accidental; it evokes both calm and seriousness, underscoring the emotional weight of the storyline (Putra & Diniati, 2019). The woman's anxious demeanor and the phone in her hand symbolize an urgent need for digital connection, which directly relates to the advocacy of digital literacy: individuals today rely on digital platforms for communication, information-seeking, and emotional reassurance. This reflects Wang et al., (2012), who highlight that digital literacy is influenced by both psychological and social factors. Thus, the poster's semiotics do not merely set a mood; they actively illustrate the critical role of digital literacy in navigating emotional and informational crises in contemporary society.



**Figure 2.** Facetime video call notification as in the illustration from the visual elements  
Source: IMDb (2023)

This visual element features a stack of six FaceTime notifications, each marked with “Mom” and “FaceTime Unavailable.” The repetition highlights not only the main character’s emotional urgency but also her persistence in leveraging digital communication tools—a clear demonstration of digital literacy.

**Table 2.** Facetime Video Call Notification as Visual Element

| Visual Element                                                                       | Signifier                                                                                                                                      | Signified                                                                                                       | Connotation (Digital Literacy)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Facetime video call notifications with label “Mom” and status “FaceTime Unavailable” | A series of six green FaceTime notification icons, each labeled “Mom” and “FaceTime Unavailable”; proximity to the main character’s smartphone | Multiple unsuccessful attempts to contact mother; persistent digital communication effort in a crisis situation | Demonstrates high digital literacy: adept use of communication apps, persistence in problem-solving, and reliance on digital tools for emotional connection and information. Emphasizes generational fluency in digital communication (Gilster, 1997; Wang et al., 2012). |

Source: Author’s analysis, adapted from Gilster (1997), Wang et al. (2012), Saussure (2011), Chandler (2003)

As Gilster (1997) and Wang et al. (2012) argue, digital literacy comprises both technical ability and the social-psychological drive to utilize digital platforms for solving real-world problems. The use of FaceTime, a platform-specific application, further signifies the character’s comfort and skill with advanced digital devices, typical of younger generations. This scene visually narrates the tension between technological accessibility and personal connection, while also reinforcing the narrative of digital dependency in crisis. In the broader context of Digital Literacy Advocacy, this image affirms that digital fluency is not just about using technology, but about navigating complex social realities through persistent and strategic digital engagement.



**Figure 3.** Screenshot of conversation portrait as in the illustration from the visual elements  
Source: IMDb (2023)

This visual element shows a digital conversation, with blue bubbles indicating sent messages and a single white bubble for a received message—yet there is no response, underscoring a sense of digital anxiety and isolation. The inclusion of an audio waveform and the tagline “no one disappears without a trace” intensifies the narrative tension, providing both visual and textual cues to the viewer.

**Table 3.** Screenshot of Conversation Portrait as Visual Element

| Visual Element                                                                                                                     | Signifier                                                                                                          | Signified                                                                                                 | Connotation (Digital Literacy)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| iMessage conversation screenshot with blue and white text bubbles, audio waveform, and tagline “no one disappears without a trace” | Blue bubbles (messages sent), white bubble (message received), absence of reply, audio waveform, prominent tagline | A sequence of unanswered outgoing messages; emotional distance, anxiety, digital silence in relationships | Exemplifies modern digital communication: dependence on instant messaging, challenges of asynchronous conversation, digital cues for emotional states, and the need for digital literacy to interpret intent, emotion, and social context (Gilster, 1997; Lewis, 2021; Saussure, 2011) |

Source: Author’s analysis, adapted from Gilster (1997), Saussure (2011), Lewis (2021)

As Gilster (1997) argues, digital literacy includes not just the technical capacity to use messaging platforms, but also the interpretive skill to understand and navigate complex digital interactions. The pattern of unanswered messages reflects the realities of asynchronous digital communication—misinterpretations, emotional ambiguity, and uncertainty—which require high levels of digital literacy and media awareness (Lewis, 2021). This poster segment not only communicates narrative clues about the film, but also reflects broader issues of digital well-being, emphasizing that digital literacy now encompasses emotional and social dimensions in addition to technical proficiency.



**Figure 4.** Landscape screenshot as in the illustration from the visual elements  
Source: IMDb (2023)

This landscape screenshot captures the main character's simultaneous engagement with multiple chat windows and a video call, visually illustrating her multitasking and information-seeking behavior. The overlay of a critical review quote adds an external evaluative layer to the image.

**Table 4.** Landscape Screenshot as Visual Element

| Visual Element                                                                         | Signifier                                                                                                                        | Signified                                                                                       | Connotation (Digital Literacy)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Landscape screenshot of multiple open chat and video call windows; testimonial overlay | Multiple digital communication interfaces (chat windows, video call in progress), multitasking screen, testimonial quote overlay | Simultaneous digital interactions, search for help, collaborative problem-solving, multitasking | Demonstrates advanced digital literacy: ability to navigate, interpret, and synthesize information across platforms; highlights collaborative skills, information gathering, and effective use of multimedia tools in complex situations (Bawden, 2001; Lankshear & Knobel, 2015) |

Source: Author's analysis, adapted from Bawden (2001), Lankshear & Knobel (2015), Saussure (2011), Chandler (2003)

As Bawden (2001) and Lankshear & Knobel (2015) articulate, digital literacy in the contemporary era requires individuals to read, interpret, and act on information from diverse multimedia sources. The character's use of chat, video calls, and web resources to coordinate a real-world search effort demonstrates her critical and collaborative digital skills. This scenario reflects not only technical proficiency but also the ability to manage complex social and informational tasks across platforms, which is at the core of modern digital literacy. Such behaviors—navigating, verifying, and synthesizing data—underscore the importance of digital literacy advocacy in equipping users for effective communication, collaboration, and decision-making in an increasingly interconnected digital environment.



**Figure 5.** Screenshots of some news and a person's face as in the illustration from the visual elements  
Source: IMDb (2023)

This section of the poster juxtaposes digital news headlines, such as "LA MOM MISSING," with multiple images of a woman's face—presented both as a portrait and in the context of digital interfaces. The



simultaneous display of news items and personal images symbolizes the protagonist's multi-platform search for her missing mother.

**Table 5.** News and a Person's Face as Visual Elements

| Visual Element                                                                               | Signifier                                                                                                                        | Signified                                                                                                                       | Connotation (Digital Literacy)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| News headlines ("LA MOM MISSING"), multiple images of a woman's face, digital device in hand | Screenshots of online news, facial portrait(s) on both left and right, main character holding smartphone, website/browser layout | Receiving and searching for information from diverse digital media sources; recognition and identification in a digital context | Demonstrates practical digital literacy: ability to search, collect, and critically evaluate multimedia information from various sources; underscores the importance of verifying information, digital news literacy, and media evaluation skills (Gilster, 1997; Bawden, 2008; Putra & Diniati, 2019) |

Source: Author's analysis, adapted from Gilster (1997), Bawden (2008), Putra & Diniati (2019), Saussure (2011), Chandler (2003)

According to Gilster (1997) and Bawden (2008), digital literacy is defined not only by technical ability but by the skill to interpret, evaluate, and synthesize information from a wide range of digital sources. The act of navigating digital news, recognizing faces, and cross-referencing information mirrors real-world information-gathering and verification processes. This aligns with Putra & Diniati (2019), who emphasize media and news literacy as crucial components of broader digital literacy. Thus, the visual narrative in Figure 5 not only provides context for the film's storyline but also advocates for critical digital skills, such as information validation and multimedia navigation, which are increasingly essential in today's media-saturated society.



**Figure 6.** Warning Sign as in the illustration from the visual elements  
Source: IMDb (2023)

This warning sign, featuring a red triangle with an exclamation mark and bold lettering, is universally recognized as an alert for danger or emergency. Its placement in the poster provides an explicit signal of the central narrative crisis: a missing person.

**Table 6.** Warning Sign "Missing Person Alert" as Visual Element

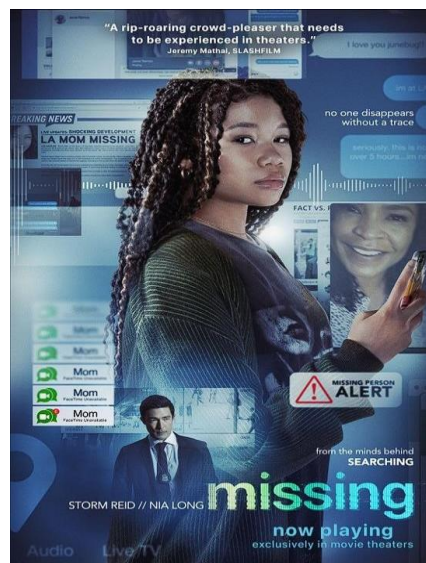
| Visual Element                                                              | Signifier                                                                                              | Signified                                                                         | Connotation (Digital Literacy)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Warning sign: "MISSING PERSON ALERT" with red triangle and exclamation mark | Red-outlined triangle with exclamation mark, bold capitalized text "MISSING PERSON ALERT," fingerprint | Official notification of danger, urgency, or crisis; signals the central theme of | Highlights the critical importance of visual literacy: understanding and responding to symbolic warning codes in digital/public spaces. Underlines the role of digital advocacy in teaching users to interpret and act on alerts—an essential component of digital literacy |



|                       |                             |                                                           |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| texture<br>background | disappearance<br>and search | (Chandler, 2003; Saussure, 2011;<br>Diniati et al., 2022) |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|

Source: Author's analysis, adapted from Chandler (2003), Saussure (2011), Diniati et al., (2022)

According to Chandler (2003), the ability to recognize and interpret visual codes—such as warning signs and symbols—is a foundational aspect of visual and digital literacy. Saussure's semiotics further contextualize this as the relationship between signifier (the symbol and text) and signified (the concept of emergency and alert). In the context of digital literacy advocacy, as discussed by Diniati et al., (2022), equipping users with the skills to decode and act upon such visual warnings is vital—not only for personal safety but also for effective engagement with digital and public communication. Thus, this visual serves not just as a narrative device but as an educational prompt for cultivating alertness and responsive action within digital environments.



**Figure 7.** Movie Poster

Source: IMDb (2023)

The poster for Missing (2023) features a pervasive blue palette, spanning the background, the main character's wardrobe, and even the digital interface overlays.

**Table 7.** The Movie Poster: Blue as Dominant Color

| Visual Element                                                                     | Signifier                                                                                                                    | Signified                                                                                                             | Connotation (Digital Literacy)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Blue-dominated poster (background, wardrobe, interface), multiple digital overlays | The use of various blue shades in the background, clothing of main characters, digital interface elements, overall cool tone | Calmness, trust, security, digital sophistication, but also melancholy and emotional depth; authority and credibility | Blue color enhances the credibility and seriousness of digital information, amplifies emotional tension, and appeals to trust; demonstrates the intentional use of color coding as a persuasive and affective strategy in visual digital advocacy (Putra & Diniati, 2019; Lewis, 2021; Chandler, 2003) |

Source: Author's analysis, adapted from Putra & Diniati (2019), Lewis (2021), Chandler (2003), Saussure (2011).

As noted by Putra & Diniati (2019) and Lewis (2021), the color blue is strategically employed in visual media to evoke trust, reliability, and composure. However, in Western cultural contexts, blue is also

associated with melancholy and sadness, as reflected in common expressions like “feeling blue.” The selection of blue thus carries layered meanings: it instills a sense of security and technical sophistication (echoing the film’s digital investigation themes), while simultaneously amplifying the emotional tension and vulnerability of the characters. Chandler (2003) highlights how color operates as a visual code within the broader system of semiotic meaning, influencing both perception and emotional response. In the context of digital literacy advocacy, this intentional use of blue not only enhances aesthetic appeal but also subtly guides viewers’ interpretations, fostering critical awareness of how visual codes shape trust and engagement in digital communication.

## CONCLUSION

This study affirms the critical role of Digital Literacy Advocacy in contemporary society, highlighting how visual media—specifically, the poster of *Missing* (2023)—can serve as an effective medium for communicating digital skills and competencies. Through a semiotic analysis, the poster was found to encapsulate various aspects of digitalization, including the use of device screenshots, digital interfaces, and multimedia cues, all of which collectively illustrate the skills required in the digital era. The findings demonstrate that digital literacy is not limited to technical proficiency, but also involves the ability to interpret and utilize digital content, critically evaluate sources, gather and synthesize information, and engage in collaborative communication through digital platforms.

By examining the visual signs embedded in the *Missing* movie poster, this research provides new insight into how visual artifacts can be employed to promote digital literacy advocacy. It also underscores the potential of film posters, and similar digital media, as tools for raising awareness of digital competencies in a visually-driven culture.

Future research should further explore the semiotic dimensions of digital advocacy by applying alternative theoretical frameworks, such as those developed by Charles Sanders Peirce or Roland Barthes. Such studies could deepen our understanding of how digital literacy messages are constructed, interpreted, and disseminated through popular visual media.

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