

Cinematic Posters As Cultural Mirrors: The Role Of Pushto Film Posters In Shaping Pukhtoon Cultural Identity

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Abstract

This research investigates the utilization of visual symbols in the posters of Pashto films, aiming to analyze their representation and occasional misrepresentation of Pashto culture. The examination centers on the interpretations communicated through visual symbols, employing a multimodal methodology. This study employs the visual communication framework articulated in Kress and Leeuwen's significant work, "Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Designs" (2006). A qualitative research methodology is utilized,¹ encompassing the examination of five Pashto film posters from the years 2017 to 2021. The results of this investigation indicate that the posters utilize a range of signs and symbols intended to depict Pashto culture. Nonetheless, a considerable proportion of these signs and symbols misrepresent Pashto culture and obscure its authentic characteristics, frequently emphasizing negative aspects. The posters primarily exhibit a unilateral approach, highlighting themes of violence, firearms, and nudity. The examination of the posters further reveals a deficiency in creativity and a notable resemblance in content. In conclusion, the research underscores the necessity for enhanced accuracy and diversity in the representation of Pashto culture within cinematic promotional materials.

Key words: *Multimodality, Visual Grammar, Media, Sign and Symbols, Pashto Culture.*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Language serves an essential function in human existence, acting as a fundamental instrument for communication and facilitating the exchange of varied perspectives and ideologies within society. In contemporary society, communication assumes a multimodal character. O'Halloran (2008) presents the concept of "mode" as a designation for the channels or mediums that facilitate the process of meaning-making. This includes a range of semiotic resources, modes, and modalities, encompassing graphical and visual materials such as three-dimensional images, posters, websites, and even commonplace occurrences. The contribution of media in communication holds considerable importance. Shah (2018) posits that media exerts a profound influence on society, extending beyond the realms of communication, education, information, and entertainment. It is considered the fundamental basis that influences society, rendering it an essential component of the societal framework. Furthermore, Shah posits that media possesses significant authority in

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shaping individuals' perceptions, formulating narratives, and potentially affecting their decision-making processes.

Osborne (2008) posits that movie posters function as multimodal advertisements and visual representations. Their objective is to present and advocate for films while engaging the interest of audiences. The analysis of a movie poster, as a visual artifact, necessitates the deconstruction of various semiotic signs that are intricately embedded within the image.

The role of culture is paramount in this system of signification, as meanings are pre-established within signs and are profoundly shaped by cultural contexts. Signs and symbols are predominantly constructed within particular cultural frameworks and are regarded as essential components of culture. The examination and interpretation of these signs necessitate the application of the discipline known as semiotics. Barthes (1964) posited that semiology, as a discipline within linguistics, is concerned with the study of signs. He delineated three tiers of significance for comprehending both verbal and visual signs: denotative meanings, connotative meanings, and myth

The movie posters integrate symbols that are profoundly embedded in cultural contexts. Their function transcends mere promotion and introduction of a film; they are also crafted to captivate and engage the audience effectively. Poster creators utilize a variety of visually engaging elements to capture the attention of viewers. As a result, the multimodal attributes of film posters enhance the depth of meanings and information they communicate. The analysis of visual signs present in movie posters constitutes an intriguing domain of inquiry for semioticians, graphic designers, and sociologists.

1.2 Pashto Culture

The cultural identity of a nation or region possesses considerable importance, as it embodies the heritage, historical context, values, and traditions pertinent to that particular locale. The Pashtuns, commonly known as Pathans, constitute a significant community located in Afghanistan and the Northern Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They are acknowledged for their bravery, dignity, robust familial principles, and ethical standards. Rzehak (2011) elucidates that Pashtunwali, frequently rendered as "Pashtunness," embodies the cultural and social practices adhered to by the Pashtun people. This code of conduct underscores the importance of hospitality extended to guests, the safeguarding of individuals in search of refuge, and the commitment to a conflict resolution framework known as the Jirga.

Shah (2018) posits that media and films significantly contribute to the construction of viewers' perceptions and the development of their individual opinions. In Urdu cinema, Pashtuns are frequently depicted as individuals lacking literacy, who encounter difficulties with linguistic proficiency and exhibit limited understanding of diverse cultures. They are occasionally portrayed as subjects of police brutality. Nevertheless, specific films such as "Lone Survivor" (2013) have illustrated the notion of Paktunwali, an integral aspect of Pashtun culture.

1.3 Cinema

Movies serve as mirrors that encapsulate the societal and cultural dynamics of a specific geographical area. Shah (2018) posits that "cinema" functions as a social phenomenon, with films regarded as cultural artifacts that reflect the values, beliefs, and ideologies that are dominant within society. Shinwari (2020) observes that the misrepresentation of Pashto culture became evident when Pashto cinema strayed from its foundational trajectory, resulting in subpar productions that were at odds with Pashtun social norms. This phenomenon led to the involvement of writers, producers, and actors from diverse backgrounds in the film industry, often lacking a comprehensive understanding of Pashto culture, which in turn contributed to additional misrepresentations.

Movie posters serve an essential function in the promotion of cinematic works, engaging potential audiences and familiarizing them with the respective film. The posters integrate a range of signs and symbols that convey significance. Gray (2010) characterizes movie posters as a "pre-text" of a film, adept at articulating its thematic essence and narrative content with eloquence. Posters, as a component of print media, convey information through a combination of visual and verbal signs, thereby enhancing the thematic content of the film. The signs and symbols presented herein exemplify cultural dimensions and exert a considerable impact on the development of perceptions regarding culture.

This research study seeks to examine the signs and symbols found in the posters of Pashto films in order to elucidate their representation of Pashto culture.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Language functions as a medium of communication, with signs serving as fundamental elements that transmit a variety of messages. Film posters, characterized by their multimodal composition, integrate a diverse array of signs and have the capacity to represent a multitude of cultural patterns. Serving as a preliminary text, the posters of Pashto films embody various symbols and function as a conduit for diverse interpretations of the cinematic work. The posters in question depict an image of Pashto culture, which may either faithfully reflect the genuine characteristics of Pashtuns or diverge from the true essence of Pashto culture. This aspect necessitates additional investigation and analysis.

1.5 Research objectives

The following are the research objectives held in this research.

1. To explore the meanings of visual signs in Pashto movies' posters.
2. To explore how visual signs represent Pashto culture in Pashto movies' posters.

1.6 Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1. What are the meanings of visual signs in Pashto movies' posters?
2. How do visual signs represent Pashto culture in Pashto movies' posters?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research study is of considerable importance as it seeks to enhance the readers' understanding and interpretation of the critical function and deep significance of visual symbols present in movie posters. Through an exploration of semiotics and multimodality, this study presents a distinctive opportunity for various individuals, such as semioticians, sociologists, and graphic artists, to develop a deep understanding and appreciation for the complex meanings embedded within the visual components of movie posters. By conducting a thorough examination and analysis of the visual signs present in the posters of Pashto movies, this research study elucidates the cultural and contextual nuances inherent in this specific cinematic genre while also facilitating new perspectives, interpretations, and analyses. This investigation into the intricate semiotic dimensions of these film posters contributes significantly to the discipline of semiotics, enhancing our comprehension of the substantial influence exerted by visual communication.

2. Literature Review

Semiotics, as described by Chandler (2002), is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of signs. It encompasses the examination of various forms of signs and symbols. Eco (1976) asserts that semiotics encompasses anything that can be perceived as a sign,

extending beyond visual signs to include those that represent concepts and ideas. According to Chandler (2002), semiotics encompasses visual signs such as images, posters, graphs, diagrams, drawings, and paintings, as well as verbal signs that involve words, sounds, and nonverbal communication. In the field of semiotics, a sign refers to any form of representation, whether it be an image, a sound, a gesture, a word, or an object. Semioticians delve into the study of these signs to understand how meanings are derived from them and how they function as representations of reality.

2.1 Non-Verbal signs

Non-verbal signs are significant in communication as they convey information through body language, facial expressions, gestures, postures, colors, symbols, and eye contact. Non-verbal signs are particularly important in visual media, as they convey social meaning rather than factual meanings. Social meaning refers to context-specific interpretations within a particular society, while factual meaning is universal and applicable in any context. Non-verbal communication, being independent of verbal communication, can either enhance or detract from the overall meaning in any given setting (Bucy, 2017). Phutela (2015) provides a definition of non-verbal communication as the act of communicating with individuals or groups in a silent manner, without the use of verbal speech, with the intention of capturing the receiver's attention or conveying the meaning of a message. According to her, non-verbal communication allows individuals to express their thoughts in a more engaging and captivating way. Phutela (2015) also categorizes non-verbal communication into four distinct parts;

- Aesthetic communication includes art forms; music, dance, theater, crafts, art, painting and sculpture. It occurs through creative expression. For example: 'Ballet' in which there is no spoken word, there is only dance and music. 'Opera' in which there are words still facial expression, costumes, postures, and gestures are present.
- Physical communication includes body movement, gestures, smiles, wink, and touch. During social conversation these bodily movements are used along with spoken words.
- Signs are more mechanical kind of communication it includes signals, flags, horns, and sirens.
- Symbols of communication include jewelry, cars, clothing, and even other sources like social status, religion, and financial means. It is used to develop self-esteem.

2.2 Media

The media is a highly influential and efficient source of information dissemination. It holds significant importance in our daily lives, as noted by Bouzida (2014). Through its various functions, the media has a profound impact on individuals and society as a whole. Numerous academic and empirical studies have highlighted the global influence of media. Bouzida suggests that visual images within the media contain an extensive network of messages that can be analyzed as a form of language.

2.3 Movie posters

Posters are a form of media that utilize non-verbal and visual signs to convey messages, according to Tsoumas (2013). They serve as a medium for communicating advertisements and events to the general public. Posters combine visual images with written information to provide details about various products and services.

Kavuran and Çetinkaya (2015) claim that posters have various types and mentioned it according to Parlak (2011). He assumes that posters can be classified into three types:

a. Cultural and artistic posters

These posters deal with cultural and artistic activities. It announces events that are related to culture in order to inform the audience about different cultures. It includes announcements related to festivals, seminars, concerts, cinemas, and theaters.

The posters collected for this study fall into the category of cultural posters. The cultural posters include movies that depict a particular culture.

b. Commercial posters

These posters are used to inform customers about new products. It introduces and informs consumers about various products in order to encourage them to purchase them.

It includes various industries, including food, fashion, tourism, and industrial products.

c. Social posters

These posters are related to social issues; they may have warnings about civil defense, transportation, or political parties. Despite these, it also includes jobs, education information, and health.

The signs used in posters that are artificially formed on purpose for the aim of communication, it represents a concept or idea. Chen and He (2014) claim that a movie poster is a form of visual communication and it also includes signs which are meant to make an impression and attract the viewers. Now a days aesthetic values are given more and more attention and concern; it is significant to analyze the movie posters in order to know the meanings of signs. There are a lot of studies present on semiotic analysis of print media, as its rich area in Linguistics.

2.4 Literature and Cinema

Literature and cinema have a symbiotic relationship, with each art form enhancing the other. Novels, in particular, have played a crucial role in the growth and profitability of the film industry. By adapting novels into films, the bond between literature and cinema is strengthened. According to a research study conducted by Prof. Dr. Metin Işık and Erdal Bilici in 2020, films act as a bridge between literary and movie audiences. As part of this study, Lev Tolstoy's renowned novel *Anna Karenina*, written between 1876 and 1877, and subsequently adapted into films in 1967, 1997, and 2012, was chosen for analysis using semiotic methods. The researchers examined various posters from different time periods and explored the similarities and differences among them, providing insightful interpretations.

According to Belgrimet and Rabab'ah (2021), the utilization of language and signs in communication plays a crucial role in constructing meaning, especially when employing semiotic modes. In their study, they applied Kress and Leeuwen's (2006) theory of visual communication to analyze English posters, specifically focusing on violence against women awareness campaign posters. Through a qualitative approach, the researchers examined the verbal and visual signs present in these posters and highlighted the ways in which their multimodal nature conveyed the intended message.

Yin and Hassan (2021) argued that movie posters, being multimodal in nature, are visual images that possess the ability to represent cultural and commercial information through the use of social semiotic signs such as images, colors, text, and fonts.

This study focuses on visual signs, specifically the images found in Pashto movies' posters. The aim is to explore the meanings and interpretations constructed by these visual signs in Pashto movies' posters, given the rich cultural heritage and extensive population of Pashtuns. As Pashto cinema produces numerous movies, the posters are prevalent and feature visual signs that are ripe with meaning, warranting thorough analysis. This study

will only focus on the representational meanings, as it exclusively analyzes the visual signs present in Pashto movies' posters.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research method, aiming to interpret and analyze the visual signs present in the posters. The data utilized for the study is sourced from Google Images. Purposive sampling is employed to gather data, with a specific focus on posters that display intricate signs and symbols indicative of the cultural context, thereby aligning with the research objectives.

This research study will employ the visual communication theory articulated by Kress and Leeuwen (2006) to examine diverse modes of visual signs. The study will specifically examine the representational and interactive meanings communicated through visual signs in the posters of Pashto films. A multimodal approach will be utilized, and a qualitative research methodology will be implemented to analyze and interpret these film posters. This study encompasses a collection of five posters from Pashto films produced between the years 2017 and 2021, sourced from Google Images.

4. Analysis



Poster 1

Zakhmoona (2017)

Note (This poster is cited from Google images)

1: Zakhmoona

The film titled "Zakhmoona" translates to "wounds" in English. This Pashto film, released in 2017, includes actors Arbaaz Khan, Ajab Gul, Laila Khan, Afreen Khan, and Jahangir Khan. The narrative centers on a son who disappears for an extended duration and ultimately reunites with his mother, only to face violence and grief. "Zakhmoona" adheres to a conventional narrative structure centered on themes of revenge and loss, featuring characters that exhibit minimal development, consistently fulfilling their designated roles without notable transformation.

a.Narrative Representation

Poster 1 presents a composition with three male and five female participants set against a dark blue background. Kress and Leeuwen (2006) assert that the 'vector' serves as a symbol for the narrative representation of the image, signifying that participants are involved in

actions directed towards one another. This poster establishes a dominant vector, with the majority of participants making eye contact with the audience, except for a male character in the foreground who is holding two pistols. Kress and Leeuwen (2006) describe visual elements as being represented as 'vectors', analogous to the categorization of words as 'action verbs' in language. The firearms and the eye level of the two male participants, coupled with their facial expressions, communicate a sense of anger and rage. The male character with the guns represents the 'Actor', projecting or merging the vector, while the male character in the foreground, donning a white cap, functions as the 'Goal', the passive recipient of the vector's direction. Kress and Leeuwen (2006) state that a double-headed arrow connecting two participants indicates bi-transactional action. The actor wielding the firearms signifies the action process, whereas the objective associated with the machine gun denotes the response process, culminating in a bi-transactional interaction between the two. Thus, the actor on the left is designated as the 'Reactor', indicated by his eye line suggesting a response to the goal, while the participant on the right is termed the 'Phenomenon', as he receives the reaction or eye line from the Reactor. The remaining characters in the poster depict participants who are visually engaged with interactive viewers.

The movie posters illustrate women's subordination to men, showing their exclusion from significant roles such as decision-making. The posters depict women exclusively as objects of pleasure. The female characters in the posters are shown in revealing clothing, highlighting their torsos and limbs, and are positioned in dance poses. This depiction fosters the perception of their readiness to acquiesce to male authority. The audience is anticipated to find enjoyment in the characters dressed inappropriately, who perform not only for the actors' gratification but also for the viewers' entertainment. The images of female characters reinforce societal expectations imposed on women and depict them as commodities for male pleasure.

b. Culture Representation

The movie poster portrays various aspects of culture. In Pashtun culture, clothing plays a crucial role in reflecting the codes and values of Pashtunwali and Islam. Pashtunwali encompasses the way of life, code of honor, and customs of the Pashtun people. The male characters in the poster are depicted wearing traditional cultural attire, symbolizing Pashto culture. However, Khan, women in Pashtun culture are idealized within the confines of the home and through practices such as purdah or veiling. Pashtun women traditionally cover themselves to maintain privacy, particularly from male outsiders. In contrast, the female characters in the poster are shown wearing short dresses, which deviates from the norms of Pashto society. They are portrayed as mere objects of display, contradicting the cultural practices

Poster 2

Ghairat (2018)

Note (This poster is cited from Google images)



2: Ghairat

The film "Ghairat," released in 2018, delves into the complex theme of honor killing and its ramifications within Pashtun society. The film explores the notion of "ghairat," which embodies the principles of honor and self-respect, while illuminating the repercussions of such actions on individuals within the Pashtun community.

a. Narrative Representation

The poster shows two men and two women. A clear vector is formed between the participants and the viewers through the characters' eye lines. This creates a transitional narrative where the participants react and the viewers are seen as the phenomenon. The actor's gun creates another vector aimed at an unspecified object in the poster, representing a non-transactional action. The dark background highlights the characters, capturing the audience's attention. The male participants show no active behavior, except for the central actor, who is shown firing a gun, as suggested by his facial expression and clenched lips. The crooked white cap on his head suggests he could be an antagonist or a morally ambiguous hero. The male participant in the background at the top right corner might seem like the antagonist at first, but this could be a deliberate misdirection by the poster designer to create ambiguity about his role in the narrative.

The film's red title, paired with the white caption "based on a true story," highlights the theme of honor, especially regarding women in society. Ghairat relates to honor killings in Pashtun society, where a woman's elopement is seen as a dishonor that requires a family member's removal to regain honor. In the poster's context, ghairat likely signifies the reclaiming of honor, possibly carried out by a male character with firearms.

The female participant on the left side of the poster appears to be the main figure in the narrative. Her face is visible, but her body is hidden, indicating modesty and hinting that the conflict revolves around her honor. The greater number of female participants compared to male participants is notable. She is dressed suitably and depicted as dignified. The other female participant in the foreground is shown in revealing attire, captivating the audience with a seductive gaze, creating a reactive response. The eye line vector shows audience reaction. She is shown as a dancer, representing the objectification of women and the patriarchal perception of women as sexual objects. The participant on the left of the poster,

with blue eyes and a smile, evokes sympathy and empathy. She appears to have a bond with one of the armed individuals and needs protection from them. This indicates she is threatened by the male characters. The dancer's presence primarily captures the audience's attention, offering little more than a means for viewer engagement in the poster.

b. Culture Representation

Pashtun society exhibits a pronounced male dominance, resulting in women possessing restricted influence within their domestic spheres. The authority to make decisions predominantly resides with the elder members of the family, and it is not uncommon for younger males to be marginalized in these deliberative processes. In this societal context, the concept of honor is intricately linked to the female members of the family. In instances where a woman is perceived to be engaged in an illicit relationship, it is not uncommon for her to become a victim of honor killing, a practice purportedly aimed at restoring the family's honor. The poster encapsulates certain aspects of this reality, as the title "ghairat" denotes the concept of honor. In Pashtun society, the concept of honor is predominantly associated with women, who frequently bear the brunt of punitive measures, while men often evade accountability. Nevertheless, the inclusion of firearms in the poster, along with the portrayal of aggressive men poised to engage in lethal confrontation, implies an alternative narrative. In Pashto society, the expression of romantic affection may frequently culminate in dire repercussions, and the mere act of conveying romantic interest in another individual can be perceived as a breach of honor in numerous regions. The poster centers on the theme of honor, while also featuring a female dancer adorned in provocative attire. This misrepresents reality, as it conceals specific facts and amplifies certain elements to serve the narrative of the film.



Poster 3

Ailan e Jang(2019)

Note (This poster is cited from Google images)

3. Ailan e Jang

Ailan e Jang is a Pashto film released in 2019, featuring performances by Arbaz Khan, Shahid Khan, and Muhammad Hussain Swati. Ailan e Jang is a term in Pashto that translates to "declaration of war." The title of the film is of significant importance, as it is rendered in yellow to capture the attention of the audience.

a. Narrative Representation

The poster shows seven participants: four males and three females. Two participants are shown in both close-up and long shots. The participants create different vectors in the image. No dominant overall vector is present. The guns held by participants form a non-transactional action vector, as they are not aimed at any specific target. The participants interact with the audience as reactors, creating a vector of engagement. One participant in the top-left corner of the poster functions as a reactor, while those in the center represent phenomena. The female participants on the left create a bidirectional transactional action vector via hand gestures, showing their interaction. They contribute to the overall reaction vector with the interactive participants.

The poster highlights the main characters, emphasizing their importance in the film. They appear two times, highlighting their significance. Two male participants are in traditional Pashtun attire; one sports a golden cap, while the other has a white cap. Their positioning indicates a close relationship, likely showing them as friends or allies. The individuals at the top corners of the poster appear to represent villainous figures, suggested by their gestures. The two male participants are shown on the right side of the poster in a wide-angle shot. This specific piece highlights their weapons and attire for the audience. The participant on the right wears a golden cap, a shawl, and traditional footwear, indicating wealth. The participant on the left wears black clothing and holds an axe, suggesting poverty and hardship. In the top-right corner of the poster, two male participants and one female participant, suggested by their attire and accessories, likely represent the movie's antagonists.

The left side of the poster shows two female participants in yellow and blue attire, mainly serving as decorative elements. Their presence adds little to the storyline. Positioned side by side, they suggest that they serve as the love interests of the central characters.

b. Culture Representation

The title of the movie encapsulates the notion of warfare, aligning with the Pashto cultural practice referred to as Badla. Badla, or badal, denotes a code adhered to by Pashtuns in the pursuit of retribution for the homicide of a family member. It entails the formal declaration of hostilities against those accountable to guarantee precise retribution. Although Pathans do not possess an intrinsic propensity for violence, the absence of adequate legal remedies frequently drives them to resort to self-directed measures. In such circumstances, individuals may perceive a compulsion to address issues personally, given the potential absence of alternative solutions. The pursuit of retribution is perceived as a mechanism through which Pathans uphold their fortitude and circumvent the impression of vulnerability. Nonetheless, the act of forgiveness remains attainable, contingent upon the sincere pursuit of it by the perpetrator, and it is noteworthy that Pathans frequently exhibit a propensity to extend forgiveness under such circumstances. The poster, conversely, predominantly highlights themes of violence, bloodshed, and conflict, while failing to provide a more nuanced representation of the cultural reality. The emphasis on negative aspects may divert viewers' attention from the wider cultural context and values inherent in Pashtun culture.

Poster 4

Kashar Khan Lofar De (2020)

Note (This poster is cited from Google images)



4. Kashar Khan Loafer De

The film "Kashar Khan Loafer De," released in 2020, showcases the performances of actors Shahid Khan, Tanveer Khan, Gulalai, and Neelo, contributing to the Pashto cinematic landscape. The title can be interpreted as "the young khan is a loafer." Within Pashtun society, the designation "Kashar Khan" frequently serves as a euphemism for an individual characterised by spoilt behaviour, signifying a person who exhibits indulgence and a lack of responsibility.

a. Narrative Representation

The poster features a blurred background and prominently displays six main participants, including three males and three females. The female characters establish eye contact with an interactive participant, creating a bidirectional transactional action vector. The female participants are reactive, while the interactive participants serve as the focal points. One vector is formed by a substance pouring from a bottle towards a female participant lying on the ground. The participant holding the bottle acts, while the female participant becomes the target. This vector represents a unidirectional transactional action. In the top-left corner of the poster, two separate vectors are formed by the hand of a participant and the participant holding a gun. However, these actors lack specific goals, resulting in non-transactional action vectors that do not align with any elements in the poster. The male participant at the center embodies the action and response narrative, while the female participants do not contribute to any narrative structure.

The movie's title implies that the main character is a loafer who indulges in drinking. The word "Kashar" refers to the youngest member of a family. Based on the still image and the central figure's prominence in the poster, it can be inferred that he is the protagonist of the story. The depiction of drinking and dancing reflects a certain reality, but it is limited to the privileged few who can afford lavish dance parties. Alcohol is forbidden in the religion and illegal in the country, making the act of pouring it on a female participant socially unacceptable in Pashto society. The presence of guns among the three male characters suggests violence in the movie. However, the female participants do not contribute significantly to the narrative representation. They are shown in full camera stills to attract male viewers.

b. Culture Representation

The poster prominently features a partially dressed female character as the main focal point, accompanied by a male character holding a bottle of alcohol. The male character pouring alcohol signifies his desire to live life on his own terms, free from societal rules and expectations. In another scene depicted in the poster, the male character is shown dancing with a woman, surrounded by people. While such instances of women dancing at weddings may occur occasionally, they are rare and generally associated with individuals of questionable character. It does not reflect the reality of every Pashtun household, as Pashtuns value the honor and dignity of women, and activities that involve the public display of women in front of men are considered vulgar and are met with pity and disdain.

The inclusion of guns in the poster reinforces the negative portrayal of men as violent. However, in Pashto society, men are typically seen as hardworking and courageous, earning a living, protecting their family's honor, while women are known for observing veils, safeguarding their privacy, and maintaining a well-ordered home. Unfortunately, the poster presents men as barbaric and aggressive, while women are reduced to the role of dancers.



Poster 5

Sartez Badmash(2021)

Note (This poster is cited from Google images)

5. Sartez Badmash

"Sartez Badmash" constitutes a Pashto cinematic work that premiered in the year 2021, showcasing performances by Arbaz Khan and Jahangir Khan. The title of the film, when rendered in translation, signifies "a loose cannon," alluding to a person who engages in actions characterised by impulsivity and haste, devoid of meticulous contemplation or deliberation.

a. Narrative Representation

The movie poster features four male participants and two female participants against a hazy background. One of the participants' images is integrated and merged with the background. The male participant positioned on the right side of the poster seems to occupy a central role, as evidenced by the prominence and spatial allocation afforded to him within the composition. The individual positioned on the left side is reiterated on two occasions, indicating a possible role as an antagonist. The two individuals depicted at the apex of the poster engage in a covert observation of an unspecified object. The poster delineates a transactional reaction vector between the represented participants and the interactive participants, wherein the represented participants function as the reactors and the interactive participants are characterized as the phenomena. Furthermore, there exist non-transactional action vectors generated by the hand gesture and the firearm, while the objectives of the actors remain undefined.

The attire donned by the female participants in the poster is deemed provocative and does not align with the established societal norms of Pashto culture. Nevertheless, this methodology is employed to capture the audience's interest and facilitate the sale of cinema tickets. The male participant positioned on the right, wielding a firearm, is presumably the protagonist, whereas the recurring depiction of the participant on the left implies an antagonist role. The two individuals positioned prominently may function as either henchmen or allies to the antagonist, as suggested by their enigmatic expressions and the

obscured visage of the villain. The poster appears to prioritize conceptual elements over the formulation of an action-response narrative.

b. Culture Representation

This film perpetuates prevailing stereotypes regarding Pashto society. The representation of male characters is characterized by their violent tendencies and the possession of firearms, whereas female characters are predominantly illustrated as dancers, whose primary role is to provide entertainment for male counterparts. This unidimensional portrayal sustains a detrimental stereotype of Pashtuns, fostering the belief that they possess intrinsic tendencies towards violence, sexism, and misogyny. Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that this representation fails to consider the varied cultural values and commendable attributes inherent within the Pashtun community. The movie poster, by accentuating and amplifying the negative aspects, plays a significant role in fostering a distorted representation, thereby obscuring the authentic cultural values and richness inherent in Pashtun society.

5. Conclusion

Multimodality involves interpreting images that possess the potential to convey meaning. Posters are carefully designed with specific concepts in mind, containing visual cues that guide viewers towards certain conclusions and interpretations. By engaging with the poster, individuals can analyze these conceptual cues and form their own understanding of its meaning. The analysis highlighted the emphasis on firearms and the concept of honor as representations of culture. However, it was observed that negative cultural traits were exaggerated and given more prominence than the actual cultural characteristics. The posters were found to lack creativity and presented a unidirectional perspective. It is important for the Pashto movie production industry to consider the imbalanced representation of Pashto culture in their posters before publicizing such content. The repeated misrepresentation of culture in posters can pose a threat to the authenticity of Pashto culture, as these misrepresentations may become conventionalized over time.

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