Creative Visual Analysis : Postmodern Visual Communication in the Black Hawk Down Headline Article on Jawa Pos

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Abstract

Jawa Pos, on Saturday, February 1, 2025, published an article headlined "Black Hawk Down." The article covered the incident involving a Black Hawk helicopter colliding with American Airlines flight 5342 in Washington, D.C., USA, on Wednesday, January 29, 2025. The article's title and illustrations evoked nostalgia for the film Black Hawk Down (2001). From a postmodern perspective, this Jawa Pos article is interesting to examine in terms of how postmodernism was depicted using creative visual analysis. This research aimed, firstly, to describe the symbolic visualization of postmodernism in print media. Secondly, it aimed to methodologically significantly determine and popularize creative visual analysis as a data analysis technique for visual media objects. The research method employed a qualitative descriptive approach. The analytical technique used was creative visual analysis with art-based analysis interpretation. The research finding and interpretation described that the postmodern elements in the visual communication of the Jawa Pos' headline article were intervisuality, nostalgia, and playfulness.

Keywords: creative visual analysis; postmodern; visual communication; art-based analysis

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Introduction

On Saturday, February 1, 2025, the Indonesian newspaper Jawa Pos published a sensational headline article titled "Black Hawk Down," covering the tragic incident of a Black Hawk helicopter colliding with American Airlines flight 5342 in Washington, D.C., United States. This incident garnered significant public attention and sparked concerns about aviation safety in the congested airspace. Jawa Pos provided a comprehensive report detailing the chronology of events, the causes of the incident, and the rescue efforts undertaken by local authorities.

The article's title and illustrations evoked the public's collective memory of Ridley Scott's 2001 film, "Black Hawk Down," which depicted the real-life events of the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu involving U.S. forces and the subsequent downing of several Black Hawk helicopters. The deliberate choice of title and visual style, reminiscent of the film's poster, prompted researchers to examine contemporary visual communication phenomena within a postmodern perspective. The research question addressed was: "How did postmodern visual communication employ creative visual analysis in the "Jawa Pos" 'Black Hawk Down' article?"

This research was deemed important to demonstrate how print media utilized postmodern strategies to construct reality, shape public perception, and create emotional connections through collective memory and intertextuality with popular culture. It also built upon previous research, including studies on exclusion and inclusion in daily guaranteed fare advertisements by PT. KAI Commuter Jabodetabek (Sukirno, Rio, & Poerwanto, 2012); advertising as crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic in tourism promotion (Purwantoro & Sukirno, 2022); and social marketing, green marketing, and poverty alleviation (Sukirno & Purwantoro, 2023). The research aimed to analyze postmodern visual communication using a creative visual analysis approach, based on three key postmodern elements: intervisuality, nostalgia, and playfulness.

Literature Review

Visual communication was understood as a readily consumable form of communication for the human eye, disseminated across personal and public media. In essence, visual communication represented visual expressions across all mass media and social communication (Josephson, Kelly, & Smith, 2020). It was considered a visual language used to convey ideas and messages to influence behavior (Patterson, 2024).

More broadly and complexly, visual communication encompassed all forms of nonverbal information in static imagery, including not only images but also layout, color, typography, and gestures or emotions that accommodated various media forms, modes, and genres within specific contexts and situations of communicative action (Forceville, 2020). Visual communication was also broadly defined as all forms of communication utilizing the sense of sight, with images and pictorial elements presenting cultural artifacts and distributed through media technologies (Aiello & Parry, 2020).

Postmodernism became a significant area of study within visual communication. Postmodern design represented a reaction against modernism. The term encompassed diverse styles where visual communication designers embraced individualism and experimentation. Aesthetic elements might have included curved forms, decorative elements and ornamentation, bright colors, and features borrowed from other design periods. Color and texture were often unrelated to structure or function (Patterson, 2024). Postmodern visual communication viewed nostalgia as a visual style emerging from specific historical conditions. Nostalgia, as a visual style, arose from particular historical circumstances and functioned as a powerful semiotic resource in visual communication. Its use was not merely a stylistic choice but a strategic engagement with the past, reflecting and shaping cultural memory and identity. Analysis needed to consider the interplay between visual elements (e.g., color palettes, compositional techniques, iconography) and their historical context to understand how nostalgia constructed meaning and evoked specific emotional responses. Further investigation into the target audience and socio-cultural factors influencing the creation and reception of nostalgic imagery was crucial for a comprehensive understanding of its communicative effectiveness (Garner, in Machin, 2014). Postmodern conditions in contemporary visual communication were characterized by uncertainty and a questioning of tradition. Baudrillard coined the term simulacra to describe this new reality, a hyper-reality. This hyper-reality contained artificial images that no longer referred to reality but existed only in relation to each other, as we recognized other images to which they referred. In the context of visual communication, this meant that meaning no longer stemmed from the objective representation of reality but from a complex and often inter-referential network of relationships between images. Consequently, the boundaries between reality and representation blurred, and our understanding of the world was shaped by a continuous and interconnected flow of images. Visual analysis within a postmodern context required a critical approach capable of revealing the interrelationships between images and the mechanisms of meaning production within this hyper-reality (Page & Duffy, 2022).

This research assumed several postmodern concepts and terminologies that were sought to be described from the visual communication object of the Jawa Pos headline article. These included intervisuality, nostalgia, and playfulness.

Intervisuality was considered the hybridity of visual forms within visual culture. This concept encompassed intertextuality in visual media (how a visual work referred to or engaged in dialogue with other works, creating richer layers of meaning), interdependence between visual media (how different visual media were interconnected and influenced each other in shaping understanding), and the interface between the viewer, technology, and the observed object (the active role of the viewer in creating meaning, influenced by the technology used to access and interact with visual media). In the context of visual communication, intervisuality described how various visual media influenced, interacted, and formed meaning simultaneously. Meaning no longer originated from a single visual source but from a complex network of relationships between various visual forms and the viewer's interactive experiences (Mirzoeff, in Balkema & Slager, 2001). Intervisuality, in the context of visual communication, was a term related to the use of imagery and references to famous works of art. This strategy naturally created a humorous and engaging atmosphere. It demonstrated how a visual work could construct its meaning through dialogue with other widely known works, creating new layers of meaning and a richer aesthetic experience for the viewer. This intervisuality technique often utilized intertextuality, where visual references created associations, comparisons, and even contrasts that attracted attention and stimulated diverse interpretations. The resulting playful atmosphere not only enhanced visual appeal but also increased viewer engagement and facilitated understanding of the message conveyed (Nikolajeva, in Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008). Intervisuality was the interaction between word and image in genres most clearly related to visual art. In visual culture studies, intervisuality was the simultaneous presentation and interaction of various modes of visuality, and art history, where it was adopted as a visual partner of intertextuality, to describe the networks of allusions, quotations, and reworkings that might connect one artwork to another (Capra & Floridi, 2023).

Nostalgia, as defined by Fredric Jameson in postmodern studies, was not simply a longing for a real past. Rather, it was a manipulation of cliches, quotations, allusions, or ready-made objects as raw materials for artistic production. Media producers used nostalgia as an opportunity for iconic experimentation through cultural recycling. Nostalgia reconstructed and represented the atmosphere and stylistic features of the past, or even reconstructed and represented a particular viewpoint on the past. Jameson argued that nostalgia in media did not attempt to reconstruct or represent the actual past but always relied on specific cultural myths and stereotypes about the past. He termed this "false realism," where representations of other representations were constructed from history, a random cannibalization of all past styles, or a haphazard play of stylistic allusions (Sim, 2011). Nostalgia presented itself in diverse forms, although often associated with the appropriation or quotation of older styles. Even without an explicit past setting, nostalgia subtly yet intentionally signified a pastness (McGuigan, 2006).

Playfulness was defined as the deliberate manipulation of textual, visual, and material elements, including the incorporation of intervisuality and parody, as well as the use of absurdity and madness to create a dynamic and interactive reading experience,

encouraging active reader participation in meaning-making (Nikolajeva, in Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008). Playfulness in postmodern works was not merely cheerfulness or carelessness but a central technique used to undermine authorial authority, challenge traditional structures, and highlight the artificiality of storytelling. It was a deliberate strategy to engage with chaos and the impossibility of achieving order or absolute meaning, often expressed through irony, parody, and the juxtaposition of serious subjects with humorous or absurd elements. Therefore, playfulness became a means of rebellion against existing norms and a way to explore the uncertainties of existence within the framework of the work itself (Sharma & Chaudhary, 2011). Playfulness was not merely a stylistic choice but a fundamental aspect of the creative process itself. Playfulness in postmodern art was characterized by freedom from conventions and rules, a willingness to accept risk and uncertainty, and a focus on the joy and spontaneity of creation (Kolyvas, 2020). This research sought to address research gaps in previous studies on visual communication. Research on the postmodern perspective in visual merchandising at Holiland stores in China (Jiang & Zhao, 2023), and research on postmodernism in advertising and films about capitalism (Afrin, 2021) left methodological and contextual gaps for research on postmodern visual communication in Indonesian print media, as addressed in this study. Research on visual communication on websites and Instagram using a positivist paradigm, quantitative methods, and AIDA theory (Mattei, 2024) left theoretical and methodological gaps for the qualitative research with a postmodern paradigm undertaken in this study.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study strategy. The case study was conceived as a detailed examination of a single setting, subject, document repository, or specific event. The case study method was utilized as an in-depth qualitative study of one or more illustrative cases. The type of case study adopted was a post-facto case study, frequently employed for post-event studies rather than ongoing issues or questions (Lune & Berg, 2017). The primary data analysis technique used was creative visual analysis. Creative visual analysis is a method for analyzing visual media objects using creative tools. It aimed to present data attractively and enhance reader comprehension of the visual analysis presented in the research (Sukirno & Purwantoro, 2023).

For data interpretation, this study utilized art-based analysis. Art-based analysis was a creative approach to data analysis that leveraged artistic methods to enrich the understanding and interpretation of research findings. This approach transcended traditional quantitative or textual analysis, enabling researchers to capture the complexities of human experience in a more nuanced and expressive manner. Art-based analysis employed various artistic forms, such as script writing, poetry, and visual art, to analyze qualitative data, helping to illuminate themes and perspectives that might have been missed in conventional analysis. Art-based analysis offered a dynamic and multifaceted way to engage with qualitative data, making the research process more inclusive and expressive while providing deeper insights into lived experiences (Kara, 2015). Art-based analysis, within the context of post-qualitative research, emerged as a creative and critical approach to understanding qualitative data. This approach critiqued traditional qualitative analysis methods for being overly rigid,

demonstrating that knowledge and understanding are inherently fluid and transformable. This perspective aligned with postmodern ideas, emphasizing the importance of deeply engaging with theory and utilizing writing as a method of inquiry. Art-based analysis encouraged researchers to immerse themselves in the complexities of human experience, often through creative expression. Through visual storytelling, art-based analysis could clearly illustrate these concepts, inviting audiences to question and disrupt normalized discourses. Thus, art-based analysis not only enriched the analytical process but also fostered deeper engagement with the complexities of qualitative data, allowing for more inclusive and expressive insights into lived experiences (Tracy, 2019). Based on the art-based research in this study, the goodness criteria for evaluating quality employed reflexivity, artistic concentration, and conditionality. Reflexivity referred to the researcher's awareness and acknowledgment of their contribution to meaning-making throughout the research process. Reflexivity also facilitated interpretation beyond conventional approaches to research. Art-based researchers could persuade readers or recipients of the work to reconsider the world from a different direction, seeing it with fresh eyes. Artistic concentration required researchers to actively engage with their interpretations of social phenomena and represent and interrogate that engagement in their work. Artistic concentration was demonstrated when a researcher had placed their work in conversation with other artistic works and within their history and expertise. Conditionality referred to the demonstration of the partial nature of knowledge claims, the fact that perspectives are conditional and truth claims are situational. The presented facts had to feel true, regardless of whether the presented events, feelings, emotions, and images actually occurred or not (Faulkner & Atkinson, 2024).

Image The Creative Visual Analysis
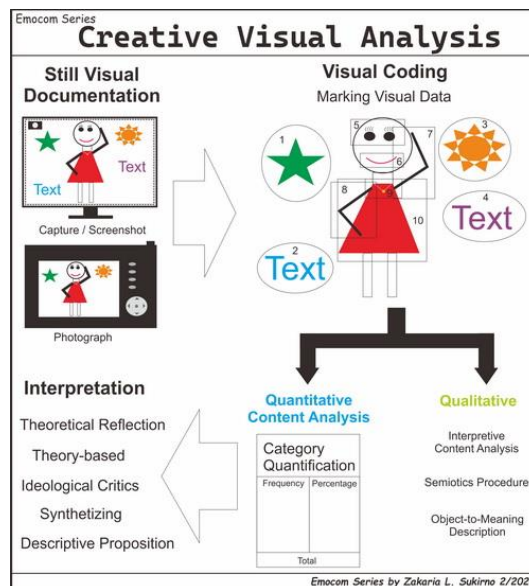
Result and Interpretation

The analysis began with documentation through scanning the "Jawa Pos" headline graphic design from Saturday, February 1, 2025. Selectively, the analyzed image elements included the "Black Hawk Down" title text and the helicopter design image, along with a scan of one paragraph from the article relevant to the data analysis.

The image featuring the headline "BLACK HAWK DOWN!" and a dramatic depiction of a colliding helicopter described the first intervisuality linked to Ridley Scott's film, "Black Hawk Down" (2001). The explicit headline "BLACK HAWK DOWN!" directly connected the image to the film's iconic status, instantly activating preexisting visual knowledge and memory related to the imagery, action sequences of falling Black Hawk helicopters within the film's narrative, and the film's poster. This preexisting knowledge of "Black Hawk Down" shaped the interpretation of the "Jawa Pos" headline design in relation to the helicopter accident in Washington, D.C.

The second intervisuality involved the visual text "BLACK HAWK DOWN!" referencing the same title from Ridley Scott's film (2001). Differences existed in text color—in the "Jawa Pos" article, "BLACK HAWK" was black and "DOWN!" was red, ending with an exclamation point (!)—while the film title on the poster was red, with a different font and no exclamation point. However, the clearest inter visual connection was the direct reference of the "Jawa Pos" article title "BLACK HAWK DOWN!" to the identical film title.

The third intervisuality related to the graphic design of the helicopter image in the "Jawa Pos" newspaper. The graphic design of the helicopter represented an intervisuality with the Black Hawk helicopter in the "Black Hawk Down" film poster. While differences existed in the positioning and angle of the helicopter in the "Jawa Pos" graphic design compared to the "Black Hawk Down" film poster, the similarity in helicopter form between the "Jawa Pos" image and the film poster constituted an intervisuality between the graphic design of the helicopter, the helicopter's appearance on the film poster, and the visualization of the Black Hawk helicopter itself.

Through the lens of postmodern nostalgia, considering the film and poster of "Black Hawk Down" alongside the "Jawa Pos" article title, a complex interaction of nostalgic references and reinterpretations was revealed. The direct use of the film title in the headline was a deliberate act of citation, evoking the iconic status of "Black Hawk Down" and preexisting memories. The use of the same title was a conscious acknowledgment that the Black Hawk helicopter accident in Washington, D.C., evoked nostalgia for "Black Hawk Down". The depiction of the helicopter accident in the image, although not a direct replica of a specific scene, evoked the visual style and atmosphere of the film and its poster. The depiction of a Black Hawk helicopter similar to the action elements in the image further strengthened the connection and feeling of nostalgia between the film and the Black Hawk helicopter accident.

The helicopter image and the title "Black Hawk Down" directly referenced the commercially successful film "Black Hawk Down". This was identified as the commodification of nostalgia. The "Jawa Pos" graphic design utilized the preexisting popularity of the film to generate its own impact and meaning in the article title, aiming to evoke nostalgic popularity for the "Jawa Pos" article.

Postmodern playfulness often involved deliberate deviation through humorous manipulation. The headline "BLACK HAWK DOWN!", identical to the film title, could be interpreted as a humorous, even sarcastic, commentary on the tragic Black Hawk helicopter accident in Washington, D.C. The artistic depiction of the accident, while conveying the seriousness of the event, presented a comparison with the film poster, deconstructing the direct reference or humorous deviation. The presented graphic design in the newspaper functioned as a humorous positioning of "Jawa Pos"'s depiction of the Washington, D.C., Black Hawk helicopter tragedy. The image used the film's title and visually echoed the style of the film poster, creating a dialogue between the image, the film, and the Washington, D.C., Black Hawk tragedy in inter visual playfulness. The playfulness of the image could be interpreted as a humorous appreciation or parody between the film and poster of "Black Hawk Down" and the Black Hawk helicopter accident in Washington, D.C. The playfulness of the graphic design and the choice of article title became a humorous deviation from the original promotional material of the film poster to a humorous allusion to the Washington, D.C., Black Hawk tragedy.

Conclusion

The "Jawa Pos" "Black Hawk Down" article exemplifies postmodern visual communication rich in intervisuality, nostalgia, and playfulness. The creative visual analysis and art-based analysis revealed the dynamics of print media visualization within the framework of popular culture and the hyper-reality of its visual communication.

The headline graphic design of the "Jawa Pos" article from Saturday, February 1, 2025, represents a praxis of visual communication in journalistic mass media with a postmodern analysis. The conceptual reflection of Image The Creative Visual Analysis of Postmodern Visual Communication in Black Hawk Down Headline Article and Movie

postmodernism with artistic discussion using creative visual analysis in the case study of the "Jawa Pos" headline article from February 1, 2025, described several aspects: first, the intervisuality of the graphic design and article title text with the "Black Hawk Down" film poster; second, the nostalgia between the headline and visual graphic design of the article and the film title in relation to the Black Hawk Washington, D.C., tragedy; and third, the playfulness between the headline and visual graphic design of the article, the visuals, and the film poster title playfully interacting with the Black Hawk Washington, D.C., tragedy. This research contributed conceptually and methodologically to the study of contemporary visual communication, particularly in Indonesian print media. However, this study also had limitations; it focused only on one article in "Jawa Pos". Broader investigation encompassing more articles and various media types would strengthen the generalization of findings. This study primarily focused on the design and visual elements of the article without considering how the audience interpreted and responded to it. Including audience perspectives through surveys or interviews would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of visual communication. This study did not compare the "Jawa Pos" article with other articles covering similar events or with articles from different publications.

Comparative analysis would provide valuable insights into the unique aspects of the chosen article's visual communication.

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