Analysis of the Visual Presentation Contents of Film Posters: A Case Study of Korean Drama Film Posters from 2018 to 2022

Haoxiang Li[1]

[1] Doctoral Candidate, Communication Design, Dankook University, Korea,
haoxiang1992@gmail.com

Abstract: Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Korean film industry has been booming, attracting the worldwide attention and winning numerous awards in various international film festivals. Film poster, as an important means of modern film promotion, also needs constant innovation and advancement. Therefore, the representation methods of the film poster, such as its visual elements become crucial to future Korean filmmakers. In this paper, with film poster as the subject, the presentation form of each visual element was analyzed. Firstly, based on the theoretical basis of the previous research and literature review of the elements of film poster design, items were proposed for the analysis the expression characteristics of film posters, and investigations were conducted through content analysis. As the research scope limited to Korean drama films released in South Korea, this paper mainly focused on the study of 50 film posters produced from 2018 to 2022. To conduct the research, visual elements of film posters were divided into four items (typography, layout, color and main visual), and accordingly. The visual representation types of such film posters were summarized. The following research results were obtained: firstly, the sans-serif was more frequently used in the poster title of drama films. The frequency of horizontal titles was overwhelmingly the highest. Secondly, the lower-end title layout was most frequently used. Thirdly, in terms of color, colorless titles were was most frequently used, throughout the years, the use of colored titles has increased slightly. Fourthly, in main visual, the image type that used photography had the highest frequency. In terms of the types of contents and number of actors, most of them were character-centered and had more than four actors. The impact and attention of the visual elements presented in film posters are of great significance. As a representative medium for film promotion, posters can arouse public interest and resonance in reflecting the nature and characteristics of films, thereby guiding the posters to be remembered, which will in turn expand the impression of films. In case that the parts of the design of film posters coordinate with each other and get balanced, the characteristics of such form of expression will shed light on the development path of film posters. It is hoped that this study could be used as the basic materials for formulating performance strategies of drama film poster design in the future, and could be helpful to the drama film poster designers.

Keywords: Film Posters, Visual Components, Genres of Presentation, Drama Films

1. Introduction

Film poster is the carrier of film culture transmission and an important means of film commercial publicity[1]. With the booming development of the Korean film industry, the film poster itself is also

constantly developing, changing, and displaying more innovation. An excellent film poster not only plays the function of film publicity of attracting audiences to enter cinema after seeing the poster, but also has certain aesthetic value. Film poster is a visual art in the final analysis; visual appreciation and interpretation is the primary premise to attract audiences. Therefore, the film poster with multiple functions has become one of the essential links in the whole film industry[2].

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Korean films have attracted the global attention due to excellent performance. Especially drama unit, for example, Pieta won the Golden Lion Award of International Film Festival in 2012; The Thorn was nominated for best foreign language film of 88th Oscars in 2014; PARASITE won 92 annual Academy Awards (Oscars) in 2019; [and]Broker won the Festival De Cannes best actor in 2022. Drama films have complex plots, rich contents and high requirements on visual representation of posters. Few existing studies have systematically analyzed the visual representation characteristics of the special film poster design. By observing the details of the characteristics of posters for drama films released in Korea, it is possible to understand the representation characteristics of drama film posters in Korea. Therefore, it is crucial to study the visual representation of drama film posters.

This study focused on the posters of Korean films released in Korea. As a visual language, film posters eliminate cultural barriers in different regions and different environments, and become intuitive and effective in displaying film contents to countries all over the world[3]. As a manifestation of visual communication design, film poster aims at commercial promotion. However, it has gone beyond what it means as a commercial means and can be regarded as an art genre derived from popular art[4]. People's understanding of film contents can be initially realized through film posters, which requires the designs of the film poster must accurately and vividly highlight the theme of the film image, and essentially convey effective information. It is suggested for designers to perfectly reproduce the essence of film art through reasonable composition and creative presentation, and make   audience focus plots and absorb the charm of film posters when designing and creating visual elements.

Therefore, the visual elements of Korean film posters were analyzed in this study based on the presentation modes of basic elements such as typography, layout, color and main visual in terms of the interpretation of film posters. Moreover, the visual presentation types of film posters released in the recent five years were summarized accordingly. Strategic means of advertising and promotion as well as communication with the audience can be established, to provide useful practical tactics for the widely used film poster design representation strategies.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Concept of Film Poster

A film poster is a medium to introduce and promote a film to potential audiences carrying out a large amount of information in a limited space and delivering it to the public in a short time. Therefore, to attract the public's attention, posters use images and words to put up and display for a long time in places or intersections frequented by the public. Film posters have the feature that the information in them is instantly stimulated to the visual nerve, causing the subconscious reaction of the public and the chain effect, thus achieving a strong information transmission effect[5]. Futhermore, film poster also exists as an art form, achieves artistic presentation with the help of image, text and color and other visual elements. The functions of film posters can be summarized into four aspects: firstly, information about the new film; secondly, the increased attention to the films; thirdly, the film contents and cast information; and fourthly, the function of promoting effective film-watching to the public through the information of screening dates and locations[6]. Therefore, the artistic and popular poster designs in line with the sense of The Times can be displayed.

2.2 Component Elements of Film Poster Design

Visual elements required for film poster design are shown in [Table 1]. The constituent elements of each kind of film poster are different for different purposes, so each prior researcher has a slight difference. Therefore, according to the characteristics of the film poster studied, the elements were divided into four types, namely, typography, layout, color and main visual. On this basis, the theoretical contents were summarized as follows.

[Table 1] A Preliminary Study on Visual Components of Film Posters

Researcher	Classification of visual elements
Kim Sung Jae (2016)	Main title, Color, Layout, Typography, Photography and illustration, Number of actors [7]
Jin Jinah (2017)	Main visual, Layout, Color, Typography [8]
Tong Shiyuan(2019)	Minimalism, Typography, Color, Images [9]
Yun Su Jin(2020)	Images, Layout, Color [10]

2.2.1 Typography

Tht text used in film posters is divided into typography and characters. Typography refers specifically to the design of a typeface, and the presentation techniques of various typefaces that make it easy for the public to read by using the size, spacing, line spacing, length and margin of a typeface[11].

In film posters, typography is a component of both aesthetic and practical functions, and has diversity in individual, flowing and free space and form, size, strength and other manifestations. The typography used in film posters can be roughly divided into calligraphy and digital font[12]. As for the typography conveying film information, designers should not only coordinate the aesthetic and readability of the font, but also consider the subject matter and target group. In other words, the typography on a film poster not only needs to create artistic and design expression, but also to draw audience expectation and perform the functionality of the film context.

2.2.2 Layout

In film posters, layout can be referred to as "the work or technique of effectively arranging texts, pictures, photographs and other components in a limited space". In addition, it refers to the process and plan of arranging and organizing visual elements appropriately[13]. In particular, film posters can attract a lot of attention. Even if there are main visual and creative fonts, the effect of publicity can be differential depending on how they are properly arranged. Therefore, the message can be more effectively conveyed to audiences by combining layout characteristics (focus, readability, clarity, styling, and creativity).

2.2.3 Color

To convey the overall feeling and information of films more efficiently and accurately, factors such as concern, clarity and association should be considered into the coloring of film titles.

In general, the title color in posters can be divided into colorless and colored type. Firstly, colorless type is white, gray, black series of colors. Colored type has the three elements of color, namely, color, brightness and saturation properties; colorless type consists only of brightness. In film posters, color is sometimes applied to visual presentation elements such as layout and backgrounds to improve clarity and focus[14]. Not only color, but also lightness and saturation show some emotional effect to various degrees. The degree of brightness is linked to the emotions of happiness and unhappiness, and the level of saturation can evoke the emotions of tension and relaxation. In this way, color has an effect on our

emotions[15]. Therefore, as for the color planning of film poster, designers should also consider the overall atmosphere of the film such as its storyline, tone and style.

2.2.4 Main Visual

Main visual in film posters aims to effectively attract public attention on the limited screen, and to effectively express the overall contents and personality of the films by using any object[16]. The main visual representation of film poster design can be roughly divided into two types: photography and illustration. Among film posters, photography is the most frequently used to pursue reality based on facts. Although the type and content of the movie are different, and the ways of making posters are also varied, many film companies still prefer to use the key vision of single film shooting to make movie posters. Illustrations are used to show characteristics or emphasize specific objects, and symbolically, satirically or illustratively to highlight the types or contents of films. Illustrations can accurately depict details that cannot be presented in photography. The advantage of using illustration as a form of expression lies in its infinite possibility of expression[17].

3. Research Method

This study focused on film posters and analyzed the presentation of various visual elements. The following research methods were used: Firstly, through domestic and foreign papers and design-related literature, the concept of film posters and the trend of The Times were theoretically investigated. Secondly, focusing on the film posters made for commercial publicity, the visual elements were categorized into four major items (typography, layout, color, and main visual) and the features of drama film posters were analyzed. Finally, the results of using different visual elements of drama film posters were obtained through analysis, and summarized into table and data. In the conclusion part, the main characteristics of the visual effects of drama film posters were given and the trend presentation of each element in different years was found.

3.1 Collection of Research Cases

This study selected promotional posters of drama films. According to the statistics of the Korean Film Council (KOFIC), the highest grossing film type in the past five years is drama film, and the trend is still continuing[18]. Therefore, this study, taking Korean drama films released in South Korea from 2018 to 2022, selected posters of the Top 10 films at the box office each ear in the five years (i.e., a total of 50 posters) for visual element representation analysis. As shown in Table 1 below, data from the KOFIC were set as the scope of this study for analysis.

[Table 2] Top 10 Drama Films from 2018 to 2022 and their Box Office

	Title	Box office (billion)		Title	Box office (billion)
2022			6	SAMJIN COMPANY ENGLISH CLASS	13.98
1	Hansan Rising Dragon	73.69	7	The Closet	10.97
2	HUNT	44.59	8	Innocence	7.86
3	Emergency Declaration	20.93	9	MR. ZOO: THE MISSING VIP	5.06
4	Broker	12.59	10	Best Friend	3.65
5	The Pirates :The Last Royal Treasure	12.52	2019		
6	Kingmaker	7.31	1	PARASITE	85.88
7	The Policeman's Lineage	6.69	2	ASHFALL	52.90
8	In Our Prime	5.04	3	The Battle: Roar to Victory	40.59

9	I want to know your parents	3.95	4	KIM JI-YOUNG, BORN 1982	30.30
10	Hot Blooded	3.80	5	MAL·MO·E: The Secret Mission	23.68
2021			6	START-UP	21.23
1	Escape from Mogadishu	34.56	7	BLACK MONEY	20.86
2	Miracle	6.63	8	Innocent Witness	20.48
3	Perhaps Love	5.19	9	Tazza: One Eyed Jack	19.69
4	Waiting For Rain	3.63	10	Inseparable Bros	12.08
5	SEOBOK	3.63	**2018**		
6	The Book of Fish	3.01	1	Along with the Gods: The Last 49 Days	102.67
7	A YEAR-END MEDLEY	1.01	2	Intimate Strangers	44.35
8	I	0.30	3	The Spy Gone North	42.97
9	Double Patty	0.13	4	Dark Figure of Crime	33.00
10	A Different Plot	0.04	5	Default	30.85
2020			6	Keys to the Heart	27.44
1	The Man Standing Next	41.22	7	The Drug King	15.78
2	Peninsula	33.07	8	Door Lock	12.79
3	#ALIVE	15.97	9	Little Forest	11.92
4	Pawn	14.75	10	Golden Slumber	11.41
5	Steel Rain2: Summit	14.66			

3.2 Selection of Analysis Items in Research Cases

To analyze the visual representation of drama film poster design, the previous research was taken as the theoretical basis as mentioned above, analysis items were set for the present study, and the analysis framework of visual representation elements was extracted as shown in [Table 2] below. The visual presentation element items were divided into four categories for analysis: typography, layout, color and main visual. The sub-items were classified as follows: Firstly, typography was divided into four types (sans-serif, serif, calligraphy and others), and there were three types of arrangement in typography (horizontal arrangement, longitudinal arrangement and mixed arrangement). Secondly, the position of layout was divided into three types (upper, middle and lower-end); Thirdly, there were three types of color (colored, colorless and mixed color). Finally, according to the applicable form of images in main visual, it was divided into three types (photography, illustration, and photography+illustration). There are three types of presentation contents (character-centered, scene-centered, and character+scene) in main visual. The number of actors in main visual was divided into 5 types (0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 or more). The visual presentation of drama film posters was analyzed through the above sub-items.

[Table 3] Detailed Rules for Visual Component Analysis

Distribution	Item	Sub-item			
Typography	Title font	Sans-serif	Serif	Calligraphy	Others
	Title arrangement	Horizontal arrangement	Longitudinal arrangement		Mixed arrangement
Layout	Title position	Upper end	Middle		Lower-end
Color	Title color	Colored	Colorless		Mixed color
Main visual	Image	Photography	Illustration		Photography + illustration
	Type of presentation contents	Character-centered	Scene-centered		Character + scene
	Number of actors	0	1	2	3	4 or more

3.3 Analysis Results of Visual Components of Film Posters

3.3.1 Analysis Results of Title Font

[Table 4] Comprehensive Distribution Diagram of Title Font

Item	2018 Quantity (%)	2019 Quantity（%）	2020 Quantity（%）	2021 Quantity（%）	2022 Quantity（%）	Total	Graph of frequency
Sans-serif	4 (8%)	5 (10%)	6 (12%)	4 (8%)	5 (10%)	24 (48%)	
Serif	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	8 (16%)	
Calligraphy	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	-	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	11 (22%)	
Other types	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	7 (14%)	

The analysis results of the font used in the poster title of drama films are shown in [Table 4]. The sans-serif accounted the highest percentage 48%, followed by calligraphy 22%, serif 16%, and other types 14%. From the perspective of annual change trend, the usage rate of sans-serif was the highest in each year of the five years. Examples of the drama film posters with sans-serif title are shown in [Fig. 1].

[Fig. 1] Examples of the Drama Film Posters with Sans-serif title

3.3.2 Analysis Results of Title Arrangement

[Table 5] Comprehensive Distribution Diagram of Title Arrangement

Item	2018 Quantity (%)	2019 Quantity（%）	2020 Quantity（%）	2021 Quantity（%）	2022 Quantity（%）	Total	Graph of frequency
Horizontal arrangement	9 (18%)	9 (18%)	7 (14%)	9 (18%)	9 (18%)	43 (86%)	
Longitudinal arrangement	-	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	4 (8%)	
Other arrangement	1 (2%)	-	2 (4%)	-	-	3 (6%)	

The analysis results of the title arrangement in the drama film posters are shown in [Table 5]. Horizontal arrangement turned out to be the most dominant proportion 86%, followed by longitudinal arrangement 8% and other arrangement 6%. From the perspective of annual change trends, horizontal

arrangement was used every year, while vertical arrangement was tried every year since 2019. Examples of the drama film posters with horizontal title are shown in [Fig. 2].

[Fig. 2] Examples of the Drama Film Posters with Horizontal Title

3.3.3 Analysis Results of Title Location

[Table 6] Comprehensive Distribution Diagram of Title Position

Item	2018 Quantity (%)	2019 Quantity （%）	2020 Quantity （%）	2021 Quantity （%）	2022 Quantity （%）	Total	Graph of frequency
Upper-end	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	-	10 (20%)	
Middle position	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	-	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	6 (12%)	
Lower-end	7 (14%)	6 (12%)	8 (16%)	6 (12%)	7 (14%)	34 (68%)	

The analysis results of the title location in the drama film posters are shown in [Table 6]. The lower-end type accounted for the highest proportion 68%, followed by the upper end type 20%, while the middle position type was rarely used accounting 12% over the five years. From the perspective of the annual change trend, only the lower-end was used every year, with the proportion of use of more than half of the same year. Examples of the drama film posters with lower-end title are shown in [Fig. 3].

[Fig. 3] Examples of the Drama Film Posters with Lower-end Title

3.3.4 Analysis Results of Title Color

[Table 7] Comprehensive Distribution Diagram of Title Color

Item	2018 Quantity (%)	2019 Quantity（%）	2020 Quantity（%）	2021 Quantity（%）	2022 Quantity（%）	Total	Graph of frequency
Colored	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	5 (10%)	18 (36%)	
Colorless	8 (16%)	5 (10%)	6 (12%)	5 (10%)	5 (10%)	29 (58%)	
Mixed color	-	2 (4%)	-	1 (2%)	-	3 (6%)	

The analysis results of the title color in the drama film posters are shown in [Table 7]. The proportion of colorless, colored and mixed color titles was 58%, 36%, and 6%, respectively. From the perspective of the annual trend, the percentage of colorless titles was relatively high, but the number of colored titles gradually increased since 2018. Examples of the drama film posters with colorless title are shown in [Fig. 4].

[Fig. 4] Examples of Title Colors

3.3.5 Analysis Results of Main Visual Image

[Table 8] Comprehensive Distribution Diagram of Main Visual Image

Item	2018 Quantity (%)	2019 Quantity（%）	2020 Quantity（%）	2021 Quantity（%）	2022 Quantity（%）	Total	Graph of frequency
Photography	10 (20%)	9 (18%)	10 (20%)	9 (18%)	10 (20%)	48 (96%)	
Illustration	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Photography + illustration	-	1 (2%)	-	1 (2%)	-	2 (4%)	

The analysis results of the images used in the main visual of the drama film posters are shown in [Table 8]. Photography accounted for 96%, and photography+illustrations accounted for 4%. In contrast,

the genre of using illustration alone never appeared in the five years. From the perspective of the annual change trends, photography appeared every year, but photography+illustration only appeared twice. Examples of the drama film posters with images in the main visual are shown in [Fig. 5].

[Fig. 5] Examples of Main Visual Image

3.3.6 Analysis Results of Main Visual Presentation Contents

[Table 9] Comprehensive Distribution Diagram of Main Visual Presentation Contents

Item	2018 Quantity (%)	2019 Quantity (%)	2020 Quantity (%)	2021 Quantity (%)	2022 Quantity (%)	Total	Graph of frequency
Character-centered	8 (16%)	6 (12%)	7 (14%)	9 (18%)	4 (8%)	34 (68%)	
Scene-centered	-	-	-	1 (2%)	-	1 (2%)	
Character + scene	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	3 (6%)	-	6 (12%)	15 (30%)	

The analysis results of main visual presentation contents of the drama film posters are shown in [Table 9]. The proportion of character-centered genre, character+scene and scene-centered genre was 68%, 30%, and 2%, respectively in the five years. From the perspective of the annual trend, the proportion of character-centered genres was the highest, but the proportion of character+scene was higher in 2022. Examples of posters with character-centered main visual are shown in [Fig. 6].

[Fig. 6] Examples of Posters with Character-centered Main Visual

3.3.7 Analysis Results of Main Visual Presentation Contents

[Table 10] Comprehensive Distribution Diagram of Number of Actors in Main Visual

Item	2018 Quantity (%)	2019 Quantity（%）	2020 Quantity（%）	2021 Quantity（%）	2022 Quantity（%）	Total	Graph of frequency
0	-	-	-	-	-	-	
1	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	-	-	2 (4%)	5 (10%)	
2	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	2 (4%)	13 (26%)	
3	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	-	5 (10%)	
4 or more	4 (8%)	6 (12%)	6 (12%)	5 (10%)	6 (12%)	27 (54%)	

The analysis results of the number of actors in the main visual of the drama film posters are shown in [Table10]. The proportion of 4 or more actors, 2 actors, 1 actor and 3 actors was 54%, 26%, 10 % and 10%, respectively. In contrast, no drama film poster had 0 actor in the five years. From the perspective of annual trend, the poster types with more than 4 actors and 2 actors appeared every year in the five years. The type with more than 4 actors accounted for the highest proportion, and the type with 2 actors also accounted for a large proportion. Examples of the posters with more than 4 actors in main visual are shown in [Fig. 7].

[Fig. 7] Examples of the Posters with More Than 4 Actors in Main Visual

4. Comprehensive analysis results

In this study, 50 drama film posters from the time range of 2018~2022 were selected as the research objects to analyze the presentation characteristics of the visual components of film posters, according to a report released by the Korea Film Promotion Council. The analysis results were as followed.

The research results were divided into four aspects, namely, typography, layout, color and main visual. Firstly, the analysis results of font types in typography showed that the sans-serif font type was most frequently adopted. Due to the characteristics of film posters, poster titles need to invoke a deep empathy and impression on audiences at sight. In terms of readability and attention, non-serif font types could convey film message to audiences more rationally and explicitly than other font types. According to the analysis results of arrangement form in typography, the frequency of horizontal arrangement ranked the highest. This is consistent with the rule that most people read from left to right. The horizontal arrangement conveyed formal information more accurately and achieved a much stable layout in terms

of design. However, a uniform design bored the audiences, it is necessary to design various innovative arrangements of the main titles to develop a more original layout.

Secondly, according to the analysis results of layout location distribution, lower-end layout was most frequently used, which related to the characteristics of drama film posters. The main vision of characters or scenes in film posters was the most important factor, most of which appeared at the top of the posters. To support the stable layout of posters, the lower-end title appeared most frequently in film posters.

Thirdly, the analysis results showed that colorless titles were most frequently adopted. However, the use of colored titles had been slightly increased throughout years,as colored titles brought out higher visual visibility.

Fourthly, the analysis results of main visual indicated that the image type of photography was most frequency used in film posters. The extensive adoption of photoragraphy is a direct method of drawing audiences' attention, developing a sense of mutual trust through photography, and conveying objective visual information of the film. In terms of the type of contents, posters rarely use scene-centered type independently. Instead, the character-centered type is highly used. It can be understood that the fame of the main actors greatly affects the number of viewers. Therefore it is highly suggested to be reflected in the main visual. In terms of the number of actors, according to the analysis, most adopted more than 4 actors to show the film contents as much as possible in a poster. Besides, two-character genres were mostly used for films with two main characters. In addition, the main visual could be instantly associated with the information the films conveyed, playing an essetial role in the visual components of film posters.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to grasp the changing trend of visual representation styles by analyzing the diversity of representation types of Korean drama film poster design. Based on the above results, the visual representation characteristics, in the four aspects of Typography, Layout, Color and Main Visual, reflect the uniqueness of drama film posters. To start with, in the Typography, under the premise that it coordinates with the reading rules of most of the people, it enhances the readability and concern of the posters, thus leaving a profound impression on the audience. What's more, the stability of the poster layout is stressed in Layout. Thirdly, when it comes to the Color, the use of various colors has been significantly enhanced, so as to make the title more visible. Fourthly, the figure-oriented photography method has been adopted in the Main Visual to directly attract the audience's attention, which represents an objective way of expression and has enhanced the trust of the audience. The visual impact and attention of the modeling elements appearing in the film posters are very important factors. When the various components of the film poster design achieve coordination and balance, the characteristics of this form of expression will also provide a development direction for the film poster design with high-completion. Meanwhile, film posters that resonate with the public can not only enhance the sense of existence of the film itself, but also extend the high-level film promotion overseas.

On the other hand, this study has regrettable limitations, too. First, posters were taken from those of the films released in the past five years only, with insufficient sample size that cannot to draw objective conclusions. There were also limitations in analyzing the trends of the times. Second, it is a pity that the Korean film posters were not compared with those of the Asian film posters in the same cultural circle. Based on the above research results and limitations, it is necessary to compare the change and development processes of film poster design through year-by-year analysis of the domestic film posters. Finally, it is hoped that this study can contribute to the development of film poster design in the future, provide basic information for the formulation of drama film poster design representation strategies, and help the development of drama film poster designers.

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