

## Semiotic analysis of Korean Wave: Journalistic practices and global impact

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Submitted: 18 February 2024, Revised: 15 June 2024, Accepted: 17 July 2024, Published: 21 August 2024

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Reportage deviations are trying to be built in drama *Find Me in Your Memory*. Understand the codes that show reportage deviations and the purpose of their distribution through the scenes in the drama. **Purpose:** This article will become a provision for the community to implement and pay more attention to the journalistic code of ethics when contributing to news reporting. **Methods:** The method used in this research is a content analysis by observing the scenes displaying reportage deviations in the drama *Find Me in Your Memory* scenes. **Results:** The collected data was then analyzed based on John Fiske's semiotic theory, namely the Three Levels of Television Codes and the South Korean Journalistic Code of Ethics as indicators to identify reporting deviations. Secondary data in this study was obtained through a literature study to obtain relevant theories and data that can be used to answer the formulation of the problem. **Conclusion:** Various violations of the Journalistic Code of Ethics were found in several scenes showing news reporting practices. **Implications:** So this research suggests deviations in the news reporting shown in several scenes in this serial drama. This also deviates from one of the South Korean journalistic code of ethics points, which requires journalists always to report news objectively.

**Keywords:** Journalistic; code of ethics; Korean drama; reportage deviations; semiotics

#### To cite this article (APA Style):

Sonni, A. F., Jauza, A., Arya, N., & Putri, V. C. C. (2024). Semiotic analysis of Korean Wave: Journalistic practices and global impact. *ProTVF*, 8(2), 149-166. <https://doi.org/10.24198/ptvf.v8i2.45479>

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## INTRODUCTION

The current media consumption pattern cannot be compared to 20 years ago. The current use of media is technologically much different. The sophistication of the message delivery process in the current era of disruption greatly spoils the recipients of the information. One of the most affected is the film media. A film is an audio-visual communication medium that can only be consumed in a particular place (McQuail, 2010). Cinemas are places where films and audiences meet, which is no longer the case today. This technological development has led to the birth of independent cinemas that can be moved to television and even smartphone screens.

This development has finally changed the distribution pattern, which has been very exclusive. Movies can currently be circulated from various platforms, both in real-time and on demand. The industry is currently controlled not only solely by Hollywood but also almost evenly from all parts of the world. This change in the platform also presents films with various approaches, one of which is drama series. This drama series, which is present via digital platforms, is a film with episodes. There are not few fans of this drama series, so many countries produce it as a form of propaganda to convey understanding and issues ranging from Indonesia, China, and Korea to European

countries.

Korean entertainment is known as the Korean Wave phenomenon, which carries messages and spreads its culture, such as how to dress, types of food, and everything related to the Korean state. It is strong evidence of this wave. For non-South Koreans, the Korean Wave is a new cultural tour and a “cultural tsunami.” It arises from the assumption by the massive Korean fandom that Korean culture depicted in Korean dramas is very youthful and romantic with an uncomplicated plot (Sintowoko, 2021).

Beijing journalists first introduced the term Hallyu in mid-1999 China as a shock to the rapidly growing popularity of Korean entertainment and culture in China. Since then, this boom has continued and reached a stage of active penetration in various parts of Asia (S. J. Lee, 2004). K-Drama is a regular program on Thai and Myanmar television in Southeast Asia. In Vietnam, Korean celebrities are crowned as national celebrities. South Korea is the leading holiday destination for Singaporeans. Within a few years, South Korea had grown from a country of no cultural significance to a new centre of Asian culture.

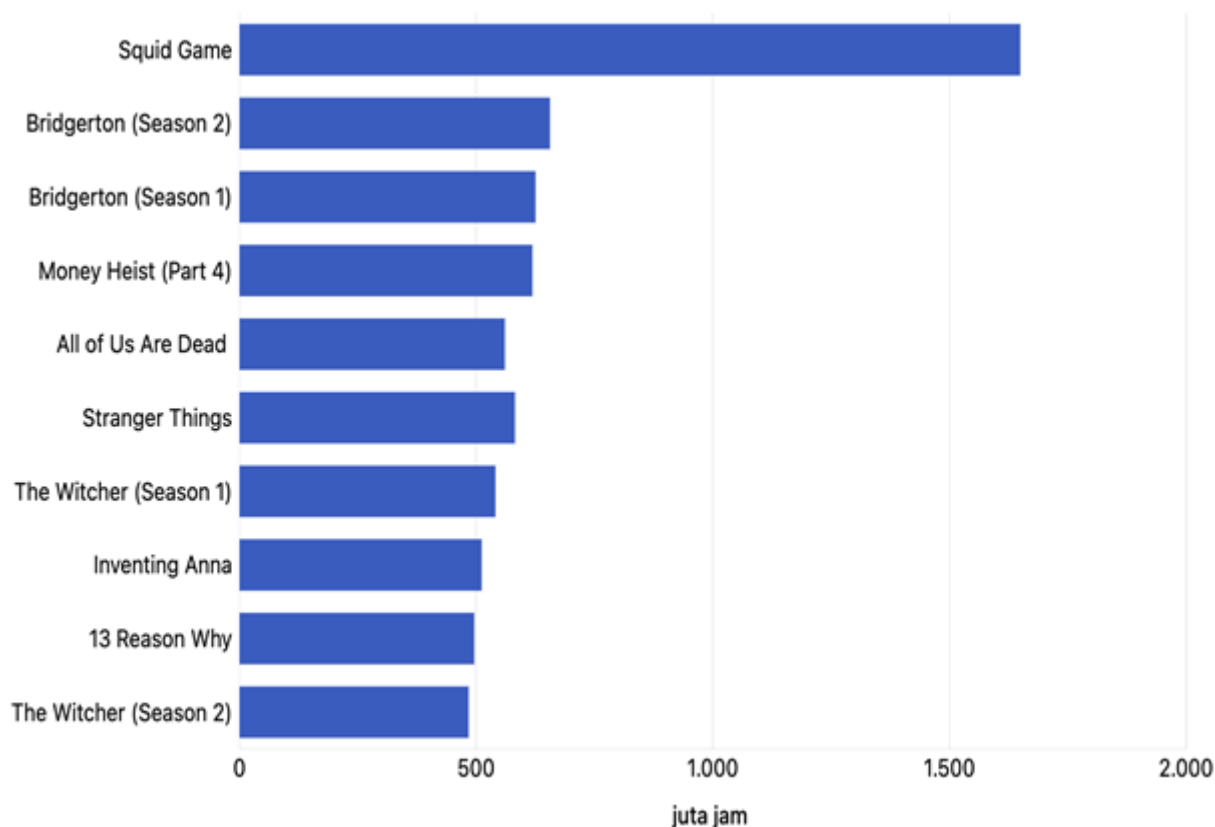
This popularity is one aspect of the credibility of K-Drama as a worthy object of research. Indonesia has not been spared from exposure to K-Drama. According to a Media Partners Asia (MPA) survey, Netflix subscribers

in Indonesia as of January 2021 totalled 850.000 million, Disney+ subscribers in Indonesia were more than 2.5 million, and VIU already had 1.5 subscribers in Indonesia. Throughout 2021, the Korean drama *Squid Game* is ranked first in “Netflix’s Top 20 Shows and Movies Of 2021” according to Rotten Tomatoes. Disney+ Hotstar, a particular platform for Disney films, launched 5 Korean dramas throughout 2021 and managed to rack up an extraordinary number of shows (Figure 1).

Meanwhile, VIU is an application that explicitly broadcasts Korean dramas, variety shows, and other Korean TV programs. Based

on research by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), 842 out of 924 respondents admitted to watching Korean dramas during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the 842 respondents, 41.3% watched Korean dramas more than six times a week (Chandra, 2022).

Of course, with millions of fans, Korean drama series have qualities that cannot be underestimated. One of the reasons why Korean dramas are in great demand is their aesthetic aspect. According to Yuh (2004), the aesthetics of Korean dramas, which are different from Western series, are a factor in attracting new viewers. Likewise, traditional Korean values



Source: CNET – Netflix, 2021

**Figure 1 Netflix Series with the Most Viewers**

are combined with modern technology.

What needs to be underlined is the aspect of reality presented in Korean dramas. Many Korean dramas raise real-life issues, which are combined with a total cinematic process. In the end, many consider Korean dramas to be drama series based on radical and thorough research. It is proven by several articles that talk about how Korean dramas are packed so accurately with real life, for example, in the drama *Law School*, which raises the issue of law.

This drama features many legal terms, legal practices, and articles that follow legal studies in South Korea and are even relevant to legal studies in Indonesia. Diana Lukitasari, S.H., M.H., lecturer at Universitas Sebelas Maret, in the webinar “Korean Law School Drama Review” organized by HeyLaw x Students Brand Ambassador of Heylaw, described that many criminal acts discussed in the drama *Law School* were especially more dominant in procedural law because this drama raises the issue of exposing murder and sexual gratification.

*Hospital Playlist*, which raises medical-themed dramas, also displays medical processes that are not arbitrary. Dr. Mike, a Family Physician from Russia, explained how accurate medical practices are in this drama through a YouTube video entitled “Doctor Reacts to Hospital Playlist Medical K-Drama Review”.

Another example is the drama *Taxi Driver*, discussed by [www.beautynesia.id](http://www.beautynesia.id), which presents four issues based on significant cases that have shocked South Korea. Namely the Cho Doo Soon pedophilia case, the employee molestation and rape case in 2014, the Jeong Nam Gyu serial murder case, and the Yang Jin Ho abuse case in 2018.

Through the explanation of the examples above and several articles circulating on the internet, ordinary people can see Korean dramas as audiovisual presentations that originate from radical and accurate research (Rahmawati, 2023). Of course, this will raise big concerns if people start to consider Korean dramas a credible source of information. But basically, the film is still the result of a construction of reality made for a specific purpose.

The persuasive power of film, which always succeeds in shaping society through the content of the message behind it, makes films inseparable from the context of society itself. In addition to reflecting reality, films also contain the ideology of their creators, so films are often used as propaganda. According to Turner, the film's meaning is as a representation of the reality of society. In contrast to films merely as a reflection of reality, films shape and re-present reality based on the codes, conventions, and ideology of their culture (Sobur, 2009).

However, communication through the

mass media in developing countries, including Indonesia, still needs to overcome many obstacles. Especially the constraints on audiences or audiences who tend to be less intelligent and critical when consuming messages conveyed by the mass media. Our audience sometimes still needs help understanding the messages the mass media conveys, so they tend to be slow in responding to these messages (Arya et al., 2013). Audiences are more inclined to “enjoy” than “understand” the messages that a particular broadcast wants to convey on mass communication media, both verbally and non-verbally. We often encounter cases like this in film audiences. Throughout the film, they focus more on storylines, actors in the film, dialogues that evoke emotion, and other aspects. Some film connoisseurs do not try to understand the meaning behind these codes further.

Regarding whether the current contents of our television broadcasts have good security for the mental interests of the generations that exist, the reality is that at present, television owners who use publicly owned frequencies are more likely to use their television station for their personal and group interests. It is very detrimental to people’s need for important information (Sonni et al., 2018). The quote implies that not all shows broadcast in the mass communication media are worthy of being watched by the public. The content presentation

is influenced by tendencies from “all sides and certain factors” before being broadcast for public consumption. An editorial kitchen with its own “seasoning” leaves doubts about whether the currently available broadcasts have good security for the mental interests of the existing generation and society as a whole.

The researcher decided to study drama *Find Me in Your Memory*. This drama, which was broadcast on MBC in 2020, has educational and moral values and is packaged in 32 episodes. The screening of this drama displays many journalistic practices, especially in news broadcasting reporting.

However, this drama shows not only news reporting that conforms to journalistic ethics but also news reporting that is distorted. Compared to previous research, which discussed journalism in a positive and ideal aspect, the researcher decided to look at it from the other side. According to the writer, this description of reportage deviation needs to be studied more deeply, especially since this broadcast is for global public consumption.

Because it cannot be denied that the presence of information flowing amid the audience has a position that cannot be separated, information plays an essential role in audience knowledge and insight. The greater the information exposure received, the broader one’s view. However, not all information can

be consumed by the public. The existence of information is everywhere, but the truth and credibility of the information still need to be explored more deeply. News then comes to organize and reconstruct information so that it is suitable for consumption by audiences. News is essential information that attracts the attention and interest of the listening audience (Wilding et al., 2018).

The mass media industry has crossed the digitalization bridge, giving rise to new challenges to the flow of information. The number of online media outlets is now greater than that of conventional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Press Council Chairman, Yosep Adi Prasetyo, noted that there were 47.000 media outlets in Indonesia in 2018 (Haryanto, 2018). Of these, 43.803 of them are online media. Advances in information technology, through the process of digitization, allow the community to take part as information providers as long as they have devices that support this work. This era practically creates a society that functions as a journalist. With a smartphone equipped with a camera feature, everyone can record events around them, which can be disseminated quickly via social media.

The term citizen journalism or citizen journalism refers to society's active role in collecting, reporting, analyzing, and presenting

news (Bowman & Willis, 2003). In Indonesia, citizen journalism has emerged since the reformation event. Several media (especially radio) have started to make the audience as colleagues, no longer just listeners or viewers (Suwandi, 2010). Andy F. Noya, former Chief Editor of Metro TV, revealed that the current phenomenon of citizen journalism could spur professional journalists to present news quickly, in-depth, completely, and accurately. The increasingly widespread phenomenon of citizen journalism will train our sensitivity to the value of news from every incident around us. One example is an amateur video from citizen journalism, Cut Putri, who managed to record the horrors of the 2004 Aceh tsunami. The video's news value is very high even though the video maker is not a professional journalist. It proves that citizen journalism has an essential role in journalism.

However, Nurudin (2009) explains the challenges of citizen journalism in the future, one of which is:

Journalists are trained people, and journalism requires a specific skill in making news. Everyone may write just, but not everyone can write news. For example, how to investigate facts, write straight news and features, write with an inverted pyramid, and so on.

Quality of content matters, and journalists are also required to pay attention to the quality of their writing. He could not carelessly write based on data from the field. He must follow

a rule so that his writing and quality can be accounted for. Quality can be interpreted according to the rules of writing, accuracy of facts, relevant sources, and others. Meanwhile, there is no demand for writing on blogs and social media, and it has to be of the same quality as in the world of journalists. Everyone can write anything in any way.

In other words, many elements need to be considered in news reporting. Losing one of them will undoubtedly result in lame information and news. Therefore, this new form of journalism is like two sides of a coin. On the one hand, it facilitates collecting and verifying existing information. On the other hand, it can boom when the information cannot be controlled in a credible, actual, and factual aspect. Based on the above, researchers consider it essential for the community to have good media literacy and reportage education.

Pratiwi (2020) examined the representation of an issue in a film using a semiotic analysis knife. The two aspects (communication and semiotics) contain explicit and implied moral messages and symbols that can be observed and become a reference for writers interpreting semiotics. Despite the different issues, the authors used this research as an initial reference for certain representations.

Simanullang and Yesicha (2018) stated John Fiske's Semiotics refines the analytical model

put forward by the two semioticians Pierce and Saussure, which focuses on linguistics (words) and ignores cultural factors in his semiotic analysis model. Fiske added cultural elements (ideology) to their semiotic analysis model. Fiske's analysis model can be used in analyzing moving images such as films and television shows. The researcher decided to take this research as a reference in aspects of using John Fiske's semiotic analysis. In addition, John Fiske's semiotic studies discussed in this study can be an additional reference for researchers.

Silmina et al (2017) determine the meaning of journalist professionalism in the Korean drama, *Pinocchio*. Also, in this Korean drama, the attitude of journalists is shown to violate the rules in the journalistic code of ethics. The journalism profession in this drama is considered harmful because there are reports reporting news that does not follow the facts; even the image of the television media is also considered negative because it orders television employees to carry out coverage outside the limits and not follow television regulations.

Television in the Korean drama *Pinocchio* has conglomeration and competition, where two media channels compete in broadcasting news and commodifying news (Silmina et al., 2017). In addition to the research object, which both study Korean drama series, researchers can also refer to this research from the aspect



of journalist professionalism, which is quite relevant to the research study.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study's objective was to examine all scenes representing reportage deviations in 16 episodes of the Korean drama series *Find Me In Your Memory*, which has a duration of 1 hour per episode. Apart from the MBC TV station, this drama can be reached on global platforms such as Netflix, IQIYI, Viu, and even YouTube. Researchers used qualitative research with content analysis methods and data analysis techniques by Miles and Huberman. Research data was collected through observation or direct observation of drama *Find Me in Your Memory*.

Through this technique, the researcher will obtain data in the form of audio and visual regarding reportage deviations contained in the cut scenes of the drama *Find Me in Your Memory*. Then, semiotic analysis is used to generate meaning by interpreting all existing semiotic elements. The data used in this research are primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from drama *Find Me in Your Memory* in MP4 format. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from relevant literature, such as books, journals, and scientific articles (Erste et al., 2023).

In John Fiske's theory of the code of

television, the third level is ideology. This level includes all elements that are organized in codes of reality and representations that have been analyzed toward the ideological stage. Before explaining further, the researcher will first explain commodification, which is relevant to the ideology of this drama. Ideology is a system of ideas or ideas composed of knowledge, beliefs, and values championed by a person or group of people in social life (Putri & Sonni, 2022). Commodification transforms goods and services of use value (value based on the ability to meet needs) into exchange value (Musthofa, 2012).

In a narrow sense, commodification is one of the political media approaches that examines social relations, especially power relations, which are mutually beneficial between sources of production, distribution, and consumption, including communication sources. Thus, media institutions must be assessed as part of the economic system, closely related to the political system. Based on these two matters, various interests arise related to the need to obtain profits and the desire to obtain profits for other business fields, which are also utilized. Therefore, commodification is a form of commercialization as a form of human-made value, especially film.

The relationship between commodification and communication can be described in



two dimensions. First, communication and technology have contributed to the commodification process. Second, commodification as a whole depresses communication and its institutions, so improvements and rebuttals in commodification will affect communication as a social practice.

According to Vincent Mosco, there are three aspects to the concentration of commodification. First, the commodification of content is related to content from the media that will be disseminated to audiences. Second, audience commodification is related to ratings for the benefit of advertisers. Third, the commodification of workers is related to how media stakeholders utilize workers.

In this study, researchers will focus on discussing the commodification of content. Everything can be used as a commodity that can enrich media owners. Media content or content is one of the commodities sold in the market, and information dissemination is spread over market control. Ultimately, commercial media must make a profit to survive, which often involves direct decisions to influence content. The fact is that most media have vested interests, especially films. It cannot be denied that film is one of the commercial products which, until now has never experienced a setback in the public interest.

The drama *Find Me In Your Memory*

displays many ideal reporting practices. The main character is portrayed as a famous journalist who competently reports the news. Even the news programs he guides always have high ratings and have won various awards. The expertise of a reporter named Lee Jong Hoon in interviewing his sources is a superior aspect that attracts audiences to watch his news program, “Lee Jong Hoon’s News Live.”

The drama *Find Me in Your Memory* presents a complex romance story and journalistic reporting practices. In almost every episode, the reporting process is shown by the main character, a news anchor, and other reporter characters. The researcher hopes that the reportage study in this play can help educate the public in identifying forms of reportage deviation. This education will become a provision for the community to implement and pay more attention to the journalistic code of ethics when contributing to news reporting. Moreover, this research’s South Korean Code of Ethics differs significantly from the Indonesian Journalistic Code of Ethics.

Every profession must understand and implement ethics in communicating and working. According to Karimah and Wahyudin (2010), “Ethics is a systematic study and concepts of good, bad, must, right, wrong, and so on or about general principles that justify us in their application in all things. Concerning the

profession, the proper definition of ethics refers to a particular set of professional values created by and for the profession itself.

Journalism is known as journalistic ethics, which functions as standards, rules of conduct, and morals. Its nature binds journalists to maintain the quality standards of their performance and protect and avoid impacts that can harm the public from the actions or behaviour of journalists. In this study, researchers will use a code of ethics that applies in South Korea.

Association of Newspapers, Korean Newspapers, Association of Broadcast Editors, and Association of Korean Journalists (Media Wise, 2011). The following are the contents of the code of ethics:

Freedom of the Press: we journalists believe in freedom of the press as our primary right to respect the public's right to know. Therefore, we promise to safeguard the freedom of the press from internal and external harassment, pressure, and encroachment.

Responsibilities of the Press: Journalists believe that the press has a critical responsibility as a public mass media. To carry out this responsibility, we vow to do our best to foster sound public opinion, promote public welfare, and advance the nation's culture and arts. We also promised ourselves that we would vigorously protect fundamental human rights.

Freedom of the Press, we journalists state that the press must be independent of various

external influencing forces such as politics, business, community interest groups, and religious units. We will reject any external attempts to interfere with or overuse the press.

News and Commentary: We journalists promise to report the news honestly, objectively, and fairly. We further promise to adhere to correct information and fairness in presenting analyses, comments, and opinions and that by considering society's diverse opinions, we will contribute to developing sound public opinion.

Respect for Dignity and Privacy, we journalists promise ourselves that we will not undermine people's dignity and will not violate individual privacy rights.

Respecting the Right of Response and Media Access, we journalists, who are aware of the press as a public mass media, will try to respect individual rights and, in particular, provide opportunities for readers to respond, express opinions, and express opposing views.

Journalists' Behavior: We journalists will behave politely and with dignity. We will refrain from using vulgar language and, as such, will strive to promote the proper use of the national language in people's daily lives.

Apart from presenting good and correct reporting practices, this drama also presents the opposite. Other reporter figures fatally violated the South Korean journalistic code of ethics. Even the analysis results at the level of reality

and representation prove that Lee Jong Hoon's character also commits several reportage deviations.

The drama *Find Me In Your Memory* presents two sides of reportage to trigger conflict so that the storyline will develop more interestingly. Only showing ideal reportage practices will not provide enough spice to make the story delicious. The deviant behavior of journalists in reporting will undoubtedly add to the story's dynamics and stimulate the audience's emotions so that it will have higher attraction and selling points.

Films also convey a specific message to the audience, aside from bringing financial benefits. Like Fiske, who views the film as a platform to disguise the filmmaker's ideology, through film, we can see a reflection produced from a picture of reality that some people can even consider a true story.

There are scenes showing several journalists blatantly violating the code of ethics in pursuit of profit. They will throw away their professionalism to get high views and ratings. The research results show that journalists have crossed the boundaries of news sources' privacy, from following and taking pictures unnaturally to covering the news in situations that require journalists to have prior permission from news sources.

There is a conflict in the drama *Find Me*

*In Your Memory* triggered by the behaviour of journalists who prioritize profit. A journalist character sells photos of a news source to stalkers and ends up in a kidnapping case. From journalists who carry out investigative functions to journalists who become criminal accomplices only for personal gain, the ideological level of this drama is capitalism. Capitalism is associated with what Adam Smith meant as a market game with its rules (Kristeva & Santoso, 2015).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Film is a tool for conveying various messages to audiences through a story. It is the beginning of the emergence of film as a medium of entertainment for people of various ages and social backgrounds. The film also has great power from an aesthetic point of view because it teaches dialogue, music, books, scenery, and action together visually and narratively.

The film has a broad and free message, therefore its meaning is subjective. Fiske argues that the meaning of media texts can be absorbed differently by each person according to their respective references. In general, films have many iconic signs that build a sign system to convey the filmmaker's message more clearly and easily. Thus, the film is closely related to the study of semiology, centred around signs and the ways these signs work. Semiotics is the

study of signification and the meaning of sign systems, how meaning is constructed in media texts, or the study of how signs of any type of work in society consume meaning (J. W. Lee, 2017).

In the Korean Wave phenomenon, we can see that although Korean dramas carry Korean values and culture, global audiences do not take these meanings for granted. They perform counter-readings by negotiating and reconstructing these meanings in the local cultural context.

For example, the strong family values and hierarchy in Korean dramas may be reinterpreted by Western audiences who value individualism. Or, romantic scenes that tend to be conservative may be responded to differently by viewers from more open cultures.

On the other hand, Fiske's theory also recognises that media texts are not closed entities but rather open to interpretation by each audience based on their cultural background, experiences, and interests. It is evident in the global appeal of the Korean Wave, which stems from the uniqueness of Korean culture, which is different from the West/Hollywood.

However, Fiske's theory is more relevant in explaining individual audience reception. It needs to be more capable of explaining how a popular culture phenomenon like the Korean Wave can cross national and cultural boundaries

so massively that it becomes a cross-cultural phenomenon.

To fill this gap, we can combine Fiske's theory with the concepts of "cultural globalisation" and "cultural hybrid" that explain how popular culture can be both local and global, absorbed and negotiated in local contexts while still offering cross-cultural appeal.

The drama *Find Me In Your Memory* is one of the dramas that deserves to be studied, especially in terms of its semiotics. This drama originated in South Korea and managed to gain popularity. It was even nominated for "Drama Of The Year" during its broadcast. This drama presents many journalistic practices, especially in reporting, a piece of news reportage. Not only excellent and correct reporting, but this drama also displays a distorted reporting process. The researcher is then interested in examining how this drama represents forms of deviant reporting using John Fiske's semiotic scalpel in collaboration with South Korea's journalistic code of ethics.

Fiske proposed the theory that television codes dissect the sign system contained in the media. According to Fiske, the codes that appear are interconnected so that meaning is formed. In this theory, John Fiske considers that the events broadcast have been encoded by social codes, divided into three levels: the reality level, the representational level, and the ideological Level

(Arlina & Nuraeni, 2022).

At the level of reality, this drama highlights several social codes that represent the reportage process, which is broadcast live. The environmental aspect in many episodes shows the entire direct reporting process, from the broadcasting studio, the appearance of Preacher Lee, and the crew involved to the interview process. The appearance aspect explains a lot about the image of the characters involved in the drama, from Lee Jong Hoon, who works as a news anchor, Jo Il Kwon and Park Soo Chang as reporters to Yeo Ha Jin, who is a public figure. Likewise, with the use of costumes, the selection of costumes for the characters is intended to clarify the character of the characters involved in the drama. Lee Jong Hoon uses many monochrome suits, and Yeo Ha Jin often uses brightly colored fancy dresses complete with accessories, etc. Many behavioral aspects describe reporting deviations identified through violations of the South Korean journalistic code of ethics. For example, Lee Jong Hoon's behaviour in episode 5 is when he searches Ji Hyun Geun's personal belongings to obtain the facts he needs without prior permission. Episode 10 also shows reporter Jo Il Kwon removing his hat to expose the face of a criminal while doing news reporting. Aspects of the speaking style presented in this drama are highlighted in the presentation of news scripts,

which tend to be straightforward, medium-tempo, and firm by the characters who work in news broadcasting, especially Lee Jong Hoon. Gestures are displayed as an affirmation of certain things during the live report procession. For example, the first episode presented news sources clenching their fists in response to Lee Jong Hoon's impolite behaviour during an interview. In addition, in episode 13, one of the crew members gave a thumbs-up to Lee Jong Hoon as a sign that the live broadcast was starting. The expressions shown are more to emphasize the dialogue spoken by the characters during the reporting process. For example, Lee Jong Hoon's serious and confident expression when reporting the news, and reporter Park Soo Chang's panicked expression when he was caught violating his privacy by breaking into the yard to take pictures of Yeo Ha Jin and becoming a criminal accomplice.

At the representation level, technical camera code uses many long-shot techniques to show aspects of the environment and scene settings. Extreme close up and close up also dominate the scene to focus on the expressions and gestures of the characters. Full shot shows reporters' deviant behaviour when reporting news and other shooting techniques. The music presented in this drama is also the most typical opening television program instruments familiar to be heard on news programs. The

social setting code is widely displayed to show the broadcasting studio “Lee Jong Hoon’s News Live”, the crime scene when reporting news, etc.

The social code of dialogue displays many apparent reportage deviations. In several scenes, Lee Jong Hoon and other reporter figures violate privacy by mentioning the identities of the perpetrators or victims reported in the news. Thus, the most reported deviations in this drama are privacy violations by journalists, which are alluded to in the second and fifth points of the South Korean journalistic code of ethics.

The ideological level presented in this drama is capitalism. Collaborating with Vincent Moscow’s commodification theory, the reportage deviation shown in this drama includes the commodification of content to obtain a higher selling point. Films, as a product of commercialization, must have exciting aspects that will allow them to obtain maximum profit. Reportage deviations in this drama will trigger story dynamics and conflicts to provide a more exciting and entertaining plot. Vincent Moscow considers everything to be a commodity that can enrich media owners. Media content or content is one of the commodities sold in the market, and the dissemination of information is spread over market control. Ultimately, commercial media must make a profit to survive, which often involves direct decisions to influence

content. Thus, the placement of reporting deviation in this drama is influenced by the notion of capitalism, which cannot be denied has succeeded in controlling the media to this day.

Not only that, but this drama also disguises the ideology of capitalism through several reporter characters. A group of journalists neglects their professionalism in asking permission first before covering funeral homes just for the sake of rating needs and being the fastest in getting news. The second and seventh journalistic codes of ethics explain how a journalist must be responsible and behave with dignity in respecting fundamental individual rights.

Reporter Park Soo Chang is also described as a profit-oriented reporter who breaks into houses to take photos and sells them to a criminal. This figure most clearly represents capitalist traits and ignores the ethical and professional values that one should have.

The research prompt brings to light a compelling issue surrounding the ethical implications associated with the manifestation of capitalistic tendencies within journalism. As highlighted, the drama in question depicts a group of reporters who prioritize factors such as ratings and speed over upholding the fundamental principles of journalistic ethics (Mackay, 2012; Starck, 2001; Steele, 1987).



The notion of journalists abandoning their professional obligations in pursuit of financial gains or ratings is a concerning phenomenon that has been explored in various academic studies (Mackay, 2012; Steele, 1987). One such study emphasizes the dilemma journalists face in balancing competing values, including those of “competition, careerism, journalistic norms, peer pressure, technology, and management and organizational expectations.” This suggests that journalists are often constrained by myriad forces that can compromise their ethical decision-making. Similarly, another study has found that constraints, ranging from technological to community and organizational factors, can significantly impact the ethical considerations of journalists (Mackay, 2012).

The erosion of journalistic integrity in the pursuit of commercial interests is further highlighted by the portrayal of the character Park Soo Chang, who is described as a profit-oriented reporter who violates ethical boundaries to obtain and sell sensational photographs (Mackay, 2012; Steele, 1987). This character’s actions embody the capitalistic tendencies that can infiltrate the journalism profession, where the drive for financial gain supersedes the core values of responsible and dignified reporting (Mackay, 2012; Steele, 1987).

The research prompt’s emphasis on the “ideology of capitalism” being “disguised”

through these journalistic characters underscores the insidious nature of this phenomenon, wherein the public’s trust in the media is undermined by the prioritization of profit over the public interest (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021).

This crisis of conscience within the journalism industry has been widely recognized, with scholars calling for a recalibration of the profession’s priorities to put the public good before the maximization of profit. It concern is echoed in the digital media ethics source, which notes the challenges faced by journalists as they navigate the changing media landscape. In this environment, “basic principles are being challenged” and the “old economic model of a mass media based on advertising and circulation sales” is being disrupted. Consequently, some journalists have been driven to seek alternative funding sources, such as foundation grants and citizen donations, in a bid to maintain their independence and commitment to public-interest journalism.

The portrayal of Park Soo Chang further underscores the dangers of this profit-driven mentality, as he brazenly violates ethical boundaries in pursuit of personal financial gain. This character’s actions represent the antithesis of the core principles that should guide the journalism profession, which include “responsibility” and “dignity in respecting fundamental individual rights.”



## CONCLUSION

As the genre continues to gain international recognition, it is essential for journalists to consider the ethical implications of their coverage. It includes issues such as respecting the privacy of actors and production staff, accurately representing cultural nuances, and avoiding sensationalism in reporting.

By delving into the semiotics and ethical considerations of Korean drama journalism, we can better understand the impact of these media representations and strive for responsible and insightful reporting. One aspect of exploring the semiotics of Korean dramas involves analyzing the use of symbols and signs within the narratives. It could include understanding the significance of recurring motifs, colors, and gestures within the dramas and how they contribute to the overall storytelling.

Additionally, ethical considerations in Korean drama journalism extend to the portrayal of sensitive topics such as mental health, gender representation, and cultural authenticity. As journalists, it is crucial to approach these subjects with sensitivity and accuracy and to be mindful of the potential impact of the coverage on both the audience and the individuals and communities being represented.

Furthermore, in a global context, journalists must navigate potential differences in cultural norms and expectations when reporting on

Korean dramas for an international audience. It involves thoughtful consideration of translation, contextualization, and the avoidance of stereotypes.

Journalists can contribute to a more informed and respectful discourse surrounding this form of entertainment by addressing these aspects of semiotics and ethical considerations in Korean drama journalism.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, A.F. and A.J.; methodology, A.F.; software, N.A.; validation, A.F., A.J. and V.C.; formal analysis, A.F.; investigation, V.C.; resources, N.A.; data curation, A.F.; writing—original draft preparation, A.J.; writing—review and editing, A.F.; visualization, A.F.; supervision, A.F. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Acknowledgements:** We would like to thank Hasanuddin University for giving us the time to work on this article.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data is available by request to the author.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Funding:** Please add: This research received no external funding.

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