

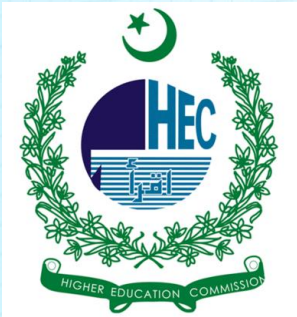
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**A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Identity Construction in
Barbie (2023)**



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Abstract

This article aims to throw light on the construction of female identity through the lens of multimodal discourse analysis (MDA). This is qualitative research and the researcher has described the role of the main character Greta Gerwig as Barbie (2024). Her appearance, gestures, communication skills, the way she carried herself, her role, each and everything has been the center of attraction. Her male counterpart, the hero Ryan Gosling as Ken has been shown in a different way. The pink color throughout the movie has described the feminine characteristics. MDA is the mode of communicating anything not through language but through different symbols like the background, dress code, appearance, feminine gestures and all that. Barbie's character has been analyzed by applying this theory, focusing particularly on her gender as well as her role in a society.

Keywords: Barbie, feminine gestures, gender, multimodal discourse, pink color

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The field of Discourse Studies has expanded technologically and thematically to include the different forms of meaning construction. Within this field, the theory of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) offers an explanation that meaning is not created or conveyed in discourse through language alone (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Through the MDA discipline, the theorists propose that all communication forms are the result of social construction and include verbal and non-verbal ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, respectively. This theoretical perspective is instrumental in demonstrating how

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discourse in films mediates and models different identities to participants/spectators through the diverse means of a communication system. It is in this regard that MDA is the most appropriate theory to describe how the film *Barbie* (2023) does not simply describe narratively, but also grammatically constructs a discourse on self through the intentional and multilayered combination of visuals, sounds, and texts.

Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* (2023) is arguably a case study. It is one of the few films that addresses identity construction and the tension between the idealized, pre-formatted, and packaged images of beings and the rough intricacies of humanity. In diving deep into discourses of identity, this research aims to go beyond a thematic analysis of the film and interrogate the ideational and material modalities of the film's construction (design, costume, cinematography, music, acting) and how, in conjunction, those modalities disrupt or promote the brand identity the film assess or shows.

Rogers (1999) says that *Barbie* (2023) has been a center of attention for discussing different matters regarding women like shaping and maintaining a proper body structure through their designs, fashion sense and appearance. The particular color "Pink" and its attachment as well as representation of a woman has also been a center of discussion. By symbolizing a woman with all the pink background and flashy outlook, it surely depicts the magical world in which all women want to dwell.

This study aims to locate how MDA proposes gender construction, color semiotics and satire that this movie literally possess through its various features and identities.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The most important piece of this research is due to the application of

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MDA. MDA offers the researcher an opportunity to go beyond plot and dialogue analysis. MDA offers the researcher a contextual framework to go beyond the plot analysis and. The meaning of a film, especially one as visual and aural as *Barbie*, is more than what it says. The visual and articulate modes are integrated together to construct *Barbie's* identity. By using MDA, the researcher is able to describe the ways these different streams of communication work, or in some cases are in conflict in order to form a complex and self-contradictory construction of self, femininity, and masculinity.

Barbie (2023) serves as a prime case study for applying Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) for a number of reasons. First, it teaches something that the audience is not used to thinking about. There are reasons, one should come to learn, for the discomfort the audience feel regarding the overly cheerful, non-diegetic music which plays throughout the film, and the overly bright and flat lighting throughout *Barbie Land*. Secondly, it clarifies the complexity of the ideologies. The film provides detailed analysis of the patriarchal overtones, and this ideology is embedded throughout the film by visually depicting the dominance of Ken, the voice of the antagonist, through the overtake of the *mojo dojo casa* houses, and the thematic transition of the color palette from a diverse and soft pink to a harsh and aggressive male dominance visually. These are the same themes and methods used by brands, social media influencers, political ads, and most of all, *Barbie*. MDA helps the readers to refine their ability to critically evaluate and analyze these kinds of movies. This research focuses on the educational and entertaining Discourse of *Barbie* (2023), offering the MDA shift from passive to critical interpretation of a cultural phenomenon.

1.3 Problem Statement

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This research study aims to fill the gap in understanding the *Barbie* (2023) film and its commentary on identity and gender. Although the film's themes have displayed discourse in the public sphere, little attention has been given to the details and layers of meaning made and how visual, auditory, and verbal elements work in contribution to the meaning making resource that MDA usually uncovers. The film's sophisticated cinematic elements, designs, and costumes contribute to the soundtrack, but have been mostly neglected in the conversation and the messages that this film provides. The study attempts to understand how contemporary popular film polishes identity politics.

1.4 Research Objectives

Following are the research objectives of this study:

1. to show how MDA closely examine and fabricates gender stereotype through various modes like visual, auditory and verbal means of communication.
2. to demonstrate how the use of MDA uncovers satire in *Barbie* (2023) that provides detailed assessment of patriarchy.
3. to link the contrast between feminism and the film's aestheticism which is much shown through visual modes.

1.5 Research Questions

Following are the research questions of this study:

1. How MDA closely studies and show gender stereotype through various modes like visual, auditory and verbal means of communication?
2. How Multimodal Discourse Analysis uncovers satire in *Barbie* (2023) that is a direct attack on a woman who is being shown as a center of attention through her appearance as well as providing a detailed assessment of patriarchy?

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3. What is the link between feminism and the film's aestheticism which is much shown through visual modes and other designs?

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study has been organized into five chapters. Chapter 1st is the introduction of the study. It covers the background, significance, research objectives and research questions. Chapter 2nd is the literature review. It covers the reviews and opinions of scholars, researchers and critics. Chapter 3rd is the research methodology. It carries all the necessary steps and methods that have been followed while doing this research. Chapter 4th is the analysis of the topic. Chapter 5th is the conclusion of the study. Last will be the references.

1. Literature Review

Following are the opinions and standpoints of different scholars, critics and researchers regarding Multimodal Discourse Analysis and its implementation on different movies.

Theodore (Ted) T. C. W. L. van Leeuwen in his investigations, especially those described in *The Language of Color* (2011), Van Leeuwen moves beyond the analysis of a composition to including the affective and the cultural aspects of color. He provides a systematically articulated framework for examining the role of color palettes in films, such as *Hero* (2002) or *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), which tends to be viewed as decorative devices rather than mechanisms for building mood, indicating the narrative shifts in a story and signifying culturally specific meanings. This methodological approach allows to analyze the ideational operation of color in the segmentation of

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narratives, as well as its interpersonal effectiveness in manipulating audience emotion.

One of the most demanding approaches is given and provided by John Bateman and Karl-Heinrich Schmidt in *Multimodal Film Analysis: How Films Mean* (2012). They are of the opinion that visual meaning from the movies results from the combination of several modes rather than being a single sum of its elements. From surface-level perceptual elements to high-level diverse interpretations, their work meticulously shows how different cinematic elements like shot composition, movement of a camera, color, and sound track interact to produce a combined complete and everlasting picture for the audience or views.

If one talks about superhero films and the concept of gender than an examination of *Wonder Woman* (2017) could employ Kress and van Leeuwen's theoretical work on the manner in which the protagonist's fighting style (one form of action choreography) is framed and designed to discuss the persuasive discourse of 'feminine power' as both powerful and aesthetically appealing. Analytically and interpersonally, the slow-motion effect by combining her fight and the emergence on the battlefield (the 'No Man's Land' scene) arguably describe and evokes a certain kind of inspiration and heroism to this construction of female bravery and power.

Different researchers continue applying MDA on movies for the representation and to discover ideology in them. There is a person named Xu Bo (2018) has applied this theory on the movie *Argo* to show different camera angles, visual scenes, patterns and dialogues. He was of the opinion that the audience is impressed not only through the message conveyed by the movie but also through different elements and symbols that usually spark the

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interest of the audience.

Another director named Zhang (2022) has applied the same theory on different movies by saying that it is one of the best ways to engage the audience perception and incite their interest level. By combining linguistic, auditory, visual and digital media, modern communication can be conveyed by multiple modes. It is the easy and more convincing method of interpreting and understanding a movie.

Recent studies in multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) have also pointed out that films convey meaning through the interaction of several semiotic resources like visuals, dialogue, sound, gestures, lighting, editing and camera movement. Jamasbi and Ghazvineh (2023) state that films are to be evaluated as multimodal discourse systems since the meaning is not created with the use of language only but through the joint functioning of verbal and non-verbal modalities. The researchers suggested a Peircean system that could be used to describe the way the cinematic signs interact to create the narrative and emotional meanings. Their analysis also proposes that the analysis of modern cinema has to employ discourse-semantic approaches to comprehend how viewers interpret visual and auditory communication

Markhabayeva and Tseng (2024) examined the meaning that viewers assign to scene transitions using multimodal cohesion. Their study revealed that unifying associations amongst the characters, settings, activities, and objects help the viewers to make sense of the continuity of the narrative. The study by using empirical measures, including eye-tracking and testing of comprehension, found that multimodal devices have a significant impact on viewers in understanding the narratives of films, as well as experiencing the emotional impact of watching the film.

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Besides discourse-oriented methodologies, new interdisciplinary research has incorporated both artificial intelligence and computational techniques into the analysis of multimodal films. Chun (2024) proposed a model of multimodal sentiment analysis in long-form movie narratives called MultiSentimentArcs. The study involved use of text, speech and visual information to explore emotional coherence in movies. The research is indicative of a developing trend in MDA research that uses computational tools to analyze audience emotions, sentiment progression, and narrative in films.

2. Research methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study uses a qualitative research design based on the Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) framework to study identity construction in the film *Barbie* (2023). Qualitative research is appropriate since the study is concerned with interpreting meanings, representations, symbols and ideological messages that are conveyed using various semiotic resources including images, words, signs and symbols, and ideological messages. The study is interpretive and descriptive in nature and is aimed at analyzing how various multimodal factors play their role in the construction of gender identity, female autonomy and social expectations in the film narrative.

2.2 Research Approach

The research takes a multimodal analysis approach since films are multimodal texts that convey meaning through the interaction of different semiotic modes. Instead of concentrating on a dialogue or narrative only, the study examines:

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- Visual Imagery
- Symbolism of costumes and color
- Gestures and expressions on the face
- Shot composition and camera angles
- Speech and language use.
- Symbolic objects and settings

In this way, the paper explores the construction and negotiation of identity in respect of femininity, patriarchy, individuality, and empowerment in *Barbie* (2023).

2.3 Source of Data

The main source of data utilized in this study is the movie *Barbie* (2023) directed by Greta Gerwig. The researcher identifies certain scenes, dialogues, screenshots and cinematic sequences which play a significant role in the identity construction and gender discourse. This Includes:

- Body language
- Costume
- Narration
- Dialogues
- Background music
- Lighting
- Movement of the angles of camera

3.4 Procedure of Data Collection

The researcher uses a number of procedures to collect the data:

- Taking a detailed look at the film several times
- Determining the scenes connected with identity construction and gender representation

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- Transcribing dialogues and conversations
- Arranging the data in thematic groups

3.5 Ethical Consideration

As the research examines a film that is publicly available, no human subject is used. The study adheres to academic integrity by making proper references to all theoretical frameworks, discussions, and academic references used in the study.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

3.6.1 Personal Interpretation

As it is the study of the nature of a qualitative study, there may be an influence concerning the personal view of the researcher and analytical comprehension of the visual and linguistic elements involved in the study. Colors, gestures, camera angles, or symbolic representations can be interpreted differently by different researchers and can therefore have an impact on consistency of findings.

3.6.2 Limitations on only one Film

The study does not consider the analysis of the whole film scene by scene but only selected scenes of *Barbie* (2023) have been analyzed. Thus, not all multimodal aspects or other manifestations of identity may be explored.

3.6.3 Concentration on a single movie

The study is also confined to one movie hence limiting the applicability of the results. The identity construction in *Barbie* (2023) might not be the same as other contemporary films as there is a difference in genre, cultural context, narrative style, and directorial approach.

3.6.4 Lack of Analysis of Audience Feedback

The research involves analyzing text and visual elements of the film

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itself and does not involve audience reactions, interviews, or surveys. Thus, it fails to evaluate the actual perception or interpretation of the multimodal construction of identity in the film by viewers.

3.6.5 Time Limitation

Repeated viewing, transcription, scene classification, and interpretation of various semiotic materials are required to conduct a detailed multimodal analysis. Because of time constraints, certain unobtrusive multimodal information might be left uninvestigated.

3. Analysis

3.1 Gender stereotype through various modes like visual, auditory and verbal means of communication

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) is a method of analysis that examines how meaning is created through the interplay of various semiotic modes including language, visuals, sound, gestures, color, music, camera angles and space arrangement. In movies meaning is not conveyed by way of dialogue only, but by the mix of verbal and non-verbal elements. In *Barbie* (2023), MDA assists in exposing the mechanism through which gender stereotypes are constructed, reinforced, challenged, and transformed with the help of visual, auditory, and verbal means of communication. The movie is critical in examining conventional concepts of femininity and masculinity, beauty and power, and other societal expectations. By using multimodal analysis, researchers can take a closer look at how the system of cinematic techniques and symbolic representations influence the viewers in their perception of gender identity and stereotype.

4.1.1 Stereotypes by Gender, with Visual Modes

The visual modes are: costumes, colors, facial expression, camera angles, lighting, setting, gestures and body language. In *Barbie* (2023), the visual component significantly contributes to the stereotypical femininity and masculinity.

A. Colour Used as a Symbol as well as a Sign of Femininity

The use of pink which is overused in Barbie land is one of the most glaring

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visuals of the movie. Traditionally, pink is used to depict softness, beauty, innocence, and stereotyped femininity. This feminine world of idealism is constructed visually through the presence of pink houses, clothes, cars and accessories. MDA examines how this color composition conveys social requirements towards women. The pink aesthetics is exaggerated, and derives its inspiration on the stereotypical attitude of society towards the feminine gender as being closely linked to beauty, fashion, elegance, and perfection

For example:

- The bright pink costumes worn by *Barbie* (2023) are a symbol of feminine ideals created by society.
- The visual appearance of Barbie land is ideal, artificial, and unrealistic in essence, which implies that the traditional femininity is usually performative, as opposed to being natural.

In this way, the visual mode is a critique of unrealistic standards of beauty that are enforced on the female body.

B. Costume and Disposition

Costume design effectively leads to gender representation in the movie. The fancy outfits, makeup, styled hair and glamorous appearance of Barbie are stereotyped expectations about women that they should always look good and look aesthetically pleasing. In the meantime, the appearance of Ken focuses on muscularity, confidence and physical dominance, which is a stereotypical masculinity. MDA explores the ways these visual representations convey social ideologies:

- Women are supposed to be beautiful and elegant.
- Men are supposed to demonstrate power, confidence and authority.

As Barbie starts doubting who she is, her costumes are getting less and

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less artificial. This visual change is symbolic of her shift out of gender expectations on women as prescribed by the society to her into self-awareness and individuality.

C. Power Relations and Camera Angles

Gender stereotypes in camera techniques are also shown in many scenes:

- The use of soft lighting and beautiful close-ups make Barbie aesthetically pleasing.
- When patriarchy invades Barbie land, Ken is seen as framed with the wider shots and center posture.

MDA researches the use of camera placement as power structures. For example:

- Male characters can seem dominant as a result of low-angle shots.
- The controlled perfection is represented by symmetrical framing in Barbie land.
- Distorted framing in identity crisis is the manifestation of emotional imbalance and societal disharmony.

The film also comments on patriarchal structures and the stereotypical gender roles through visual grammar.

D. Expressions and Gestures

The overdone smiles and the jovial body language of the early scenes of Barbie is an illustration of stereotypical expectations that women must always look pleasant, emotionally contained, and socially acceptable. As the story unfolds:

- Barbie's perplexed and confused expressions
- Exposure to emotions
- Artificial gestures

It also represents a fight against such stereotypes. On the same note, the body

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language of Ken is transformed when he learns that there is patriarchy in the real world. His proud standing, violent gestures and commanding body language are graphical displays of stereotypical male dominance. MDA takes such gestures as symbolic acts of gender identity.

4.1.2 Gender Stereotypes By Auditory Modes

Auditory modes are music, tone of voice, sound effects, silence and background soundtrack. Sound in *Barbie* (2023) is an important aspect of gender representation.

A. Background Music and Feminine Grace

In the opening of the film, the music is cheerful and upbeat making the viewer feel happy, perfect and fantasy. This musical background depicts the stereotypical feminine ideals relating to beauty, positivity, and emotional harmony. The soundtrack supports the unnatural beauty of *Barbieland*, which argues that women are supposed to be socially acceptable as happy and emotionally fulfilling.

B. Tone and Voice

Vocal tone and delivery of speech is also analyzed by MDA. The soft, polite, emotional and expressive tone of *Barbie* points to the stereotypical feminine patterns of communication. On contrary:

- the voices of men seem to be more loud
- more persuasive
- more authorized

As Ken adopts the ideology of patriarchy, his speech is deeper, more commanding and confident. This voice change is stereotypical in that masculinity and authority are linked.

C. Silence and Emotional Unstability

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Another critical auditory mode employed in the movie is silence. In the situations of emotional crisis, breaks and silence are the symbols of inner confusion and identity crisis.

For instance:

- The instances of silence experienced by Barbie can be interpreted as existential doubts.
- Emotional pauses challenges and questions the myth that women should certainly suppress their emotional complexity.

MDA views silence as an expressive form of communication and not merely the lack of sound.

4.1.3 Gender Stereotypes Verbal Modes

Verbal modes are dialogue, monologues, conversation, slogans, and word choice. In *Barbie* (2023), the language directly confronts gender stereotypes and expectations of society.

A. Discussion of Beauty Standards

Some of the dialogues criticize the unrealistic beauty standards that are imposed on women. All the characters discuss:

- Physical disposition
- Impeccability
- Growing old/ maturity
- Societal expressions

These discussions indicate how women are criticized based on the beauty standards that are external. MDA considers the ways in which language forms social identities through an analysis of:

- Choice of words
- Tone

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- Recurrence
- Dialogue organization

B. Language used by Patriarchy

Ken's language is very different when he learns about patriarchy. He starts using:

- Commanding expressions
- Convincing and controlled statements
- Masculine vocabulary

Such a verbal restructuring is a manifestation of how language is used to strengthen power and gender stratification. The movie is a satirical display of the way in which patriarchal discourse has normalized the male domination.

4.1.4 Multiple Mode Interaction

The most important aspect of MDA is that it does not analyze modes separately. Rather, it examines the interaction of visual, auditory, and verbal stimuli in a dynamic manner.

For example:

- Barbie's emotional conversation
- combination with mournful background music
- expressions that are gullible

All of these jointly create her identity crisis and counteraction to the stereotypical femininity. On the other hand:

- Ken's costume
- His confident and manly voice
- His accentuating gestures and postures
- And man-made language

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construct masculinity stereotypically together. In this mode mixture, the movie criticizes the hardline gender roles and promotes freedom of identity and self-definition.

The movie, through multimodal interaction proves that gender identity is not natural or fixed but a socially performed and culturally shaped aspect of gender identity. The change of Barbie into a self-conscious person, alongside the transformation of Ken into a symbol of unstable masculinity, can be seen as a form of resistance to the limiting gender norms, and the exchanges between Barbie and Ken can be interpreted as an act of rebellion against the restraining gender expectations. Consequently, MDA shows us how cinema is a potent source of perpetuating and subverting gender stereotypes through intersecting modes of semiotic representation.

4.2 Multimodal Discourse Analysis Uncovers Satire and Patriarchy in Barbie

Multimodal discourse analysis offers a convincing framework that usually throws light on satire, patriarchal language and criticism related to ideology in *Barbie* (2023). This is basically a commentary on the expectations of society, beauty standards and male-dominated social structure. Through diverse modes of visual, auditory, gestural, verbal and spatial, it has been declared how women are identified as objects just for the pleasure of male viewers through their appearance, standard, body, gestures, communication and often been designed as a center of attraction within male dominated society. This film surely comments on the power structure that shapes both femininity as well as masculinity.

MDA helps reveal that satire in *Barbie* (2023) is not communicated through dialogue alone. Rather, it emerges through the combination of exaggerated

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visuals, symbolic costumes, humorous performances, ironic dialogue, soundtrack choices, camera framing, and character behavior. These multimodal elements collectively expose the absurdity of gender stereotypes and patriarchal ideologies.

4.2.1. Satire Through Visual Representation of Female Appearance

One of the strongest satirical aspects of the film is its exaggerated representation of feminine beauty and perfection. Barbieland is visually constructed as a flawless fantasy world dominated by pink aesthetics, glamorous fashion, perfect bodies, and constant happiness. Through MDA, these exaggerated visual elements are interpreted as a satire of society's unrealistic expectations imposed upon women.

A. Hyper-Feminine Visual Aesthetics

The excessive use of:

- pink colors,
- perfect hairstyles,
- fashionable costumes,
- ideal body shapes,
- and artificial environments

creates a visually exaggerated version of femininity. The exaggeration itself becomes satirical because it reflects how society often reduces women to physical appearance and aesthetic perfection.

MDA studies how these visual signs communicate ideological meanings.

The film mocks the cultural pressure placed upon women to remain:

- beautiful
- stylish
- youthful

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- emotionally pleasant
- and socially attractive at all times

The visual perfection of Barbieland appears almost unreal and plastic-like, symbolizing the artificial standards women are expected to embody in real society.

B. Barbie as the Center of Attention

Throughout the film, Barbie is visually positioned as the center of admiration and observation. Camera techniques frequently:

- place Barbie in the middle of frames
- use close-up shots on her appearance
- emphasize her costumes and makeup
- and surround her with attention and praise

MDA reveals that these cinematic choices satirize how women are socially valued primarily through their physical attractiveness. Barbie's identity initially depends heavily on appearance and external validation.

The film humorously exaggerates this attention to expose the superficiality of beauty culture. For example:

- Barbie's perfect morning routine,
- coordinated outfits,
- and unrealistic beauty rituals

appear amusing because they reflect impossible societal standards imposed upon women.

Thus, satire emerges through exaggeration and visual irony.

4.2.2. Satire of Patriarchal Ideology

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The film provides a detailed critique of patriarchy by reversing traditional gender roles and exposing how power structures operate within society.

A. Ken's Discovery of Patriarchy

One of the most important satirical moments occurs when Ken enters the real world and discovers patriarchy. He becomes fascinated by:

- male authority
- dominance
- horses
- business culture
- and masculine power

The film exaggerates Ken's understanding of patriarchy to mock how patriarchal systems function. Through MDA, satire is uncovered in multiple modes simultaneously:

B. Visual Modes

Ken adopts:

- fur coats
- sunglasses
- darker clothing
- dominant body posture
- and masculine accessories

These visual transformations symbolize stereotypical masculinity and power.

C. Verbal Modes

Ken begins using:

- commanding language,
- authoritative expressions,

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- and patriarchal vocabulary.

His speech becomes exaggeratedly confident and controlling.

D. Auditory Modes

The soundtrack changes during patriarchal scenes:

- stronger beats,
- dramatic music,
- and masculine tonal shifts

create an ironic heroic atmosphere that satirizes male dominance.

Together, these modes expose patriarchy as performative, artificial, and socially constructed rather than natural.

4.2.3. Reversal of Gender Roles as Satire

Barbieland initially operates as a matriarchal fantasy where women hold positions of power while Kens remain secondary figures. This reversal functions as satire because it mirrors the gender imbalance present in patriarchal societies.

MDA reveals how role reversal exposes social inequalities:

Barbieland Representation Patriarchal Society Reflection

Barbies hold leadership roles Men dominate leadership in reality

Kens seek female attention Women often seek male approval

Female success is normalized Male success is socially privileged

The exaggerated reversal allows audiences to recognize the unfairness of patriarchal systems by experiencing the imbalance from the opposite perspective.

4.2.4. Satire Through Dialogue and Feminist Criticism

The film's dialogue strongly contributes to satirical criticism of women's social position.

A. Gloria's Monologue

One of the clearest critiques of patriarchy appears in Gloria's speech about the impossible expectations placed upon women.

She explains that women are expected to:

- be beautiful but not vain,
- successful but not threatening,
- thin but healthy,
- confident but humble,
- mothers but career-oriented.

MDA examines how this verbal mode combines with:

- emotional tone,
- facial expressions,
- camera focus,
- and silence

to intensify feminist criticism.

The speech is satirical because it exposes the contradictory standards women are expected to fulfill simultaneously. The humor within the film makes these contradictions more visible and socially critical.

4.2.5. Objectification of Women Through Multimodal Elements

MDA uncovers how women are objectified through interconnected modes.

A. Visual Objectification

Barbie's body and appearance are constantly emphasized through:

- glamorous lighting,
- symmetrical framing,
- beauty-centered costumes,
- and aesthetically perfect spaces.

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This visual objectification reflects how women in society are often evaluated based on attractiveness rather than individuality or intelligence.

B. Verbal Objectification

Certain dialogues subtly reinforce how women are socially judged according to appearance and desirability.

Characters frequently discuss:

- beauty,
- perfection,
- fashion,
- and public perception.

MDA reveals how language normalizes appearance-based evaluation of women.

C. Auditory Reinforcement

Cheerful music and exaggerated vocal performances often accompany scenes focused on beauty and perfection. The playful soundtrack creates irony, making the audience aware of how absurd these expectations truly are.

Thus, satire emerges through the interaction of humor and criticism.

4.2.6. Patriarchy as Performance Rather Than Reality

One of the central findings uncovered through MDA is that patriarchy in the film is represented as a performance rather than an inherent truth.

Ken's exaggerated imitation of masculine authority demonstrates that patriarchal masculinity depends on:

- performance,
- symbols,
- dominance rituals,
- and social validation.

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His identity crisis reflects that patriarchy harms men as well by forcing them into rigid masculine roles. Through costume, posture, speech, and music, the film satirizes toxic masculinity and exposes its instability.

4.2.7. The Role of Humor and Irony

Satire in *Barbie* is strengthened through humor, irony, and exaggeration.

MDA studies how:

- bright visuals contrast with serious feminist themes,
- cheerful music accompanies emotional suffering,
- and exaggerated performances expose social absurdities.

This ironic contrast allows the film to criticize patriarchy while remaining entertaining and accessible.

The audience laughs at exaggerated gender norms while simultaneously recognizing their real-world implications.

Through MDA, it becomes evident that *Barbie* is not merely a fantasy comedy but a complex feminist satire that challenges societal expectations, beauty culture, and patriarchal power structures through interconnected multimodal meanings.

4.3 The Link Between Feminism and the Film's Aestheticism in Barbie Through Visual Modes and Design

In *Barbie* (2023), feminism is deeply connected to the film's aestheticism, which is primarily communicated through visual modes such as color schemes, costume design, set decoration, cinematography, lighting, body language, spatial arrangement, and symbolic imagery. The film uses highly stylized and exaggerated aesthetics not merely for entertainment or visual beauty, but as a feminist strategy to critique patriarchal expectations, beauty standards, gender

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stereotypes, and the social construction of femininity.

Through Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), it becomes clear that the film's aesthetic elements are not superficial decorations; rather, they function as ideological tools that communicate feminist meanings. The visual design of the film actively participates in constructing, questioning, and transforming female identity.

4.3.1. Aestheticism as a Feminist Language

The film's aestheticism refers to its strong emphasis on beauty, visual pleasure, color harmony, costume elegance, fantasy settings, and artistic stylization. At first glance, the bright pink world of Barbieland appears to celebrate stereotypical femininity. However, through feminist interpretation and MDA, this exaggerated aesthetics become a critique of how society constructs femininity through appearance and performance.

The film intentionally exaggerates feminine aesthetics to expose:

- unrealistic beauty standards,
- performative femininity,
- social expectations of perfection,
- and the commodification of women.

Thus, the visual beauty of the film operates ironically. It attracts viewers aesthetically while simultaneously encouraging them to question the systems behind such beauty ideals.

4.3.2. Pink Aesthetic and Feminist Symbolism

One of the most dominant visual modes in the film is the extensive use of pink.

Traditionally, pink has been culturally associated with:

- softness,
- innocence,

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- beauty,
- delicacy,
- and stereotypical femininity.

In *Barbie*(2023), the overwhelming pink environment symbolizes society's rigid construction of feminine identity. Barbieland appears visually perfect, artificial, and dreamlike, which reflects the unrealistic standards imposed upon women in patriarchal culture.

Through MDA, pink functions as both:

- a symbol of feminine identity,
- and a satire of how femininity is socially manufactured.

The exaggerated pink aesthetic critiques the idea that women must conform to a particular visual image to be socially accepted. Therefore, aesthetic beauty becomes a feminist statement against restrictive gender norms.

4.3.3. Costume Design as Feminist Expression

Costume design is another major link between feminism and aestheticism in the film. Barbie's outfits are glamorous, fashionable, and constantly changing, reflecting how women are often socially pressured to maintain beauty and attractiveness.

However, the film gradually transforms Barbie's appearance throughout her journey:

- her costumes become less artificial,
- more practical,
- and emotionally symbolic.

This transformation visually represents Barbie's movement from objectified perfection toward authentic selfhood. Through MDA, costumes communicate feminist meanings by showing:

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- the burden of feminine performance,
- the social expectation of visual perfection,
- and the struggle between individuality and social conformity.

The film therefore critiques how women's identities are often reduced to fashion, appearance, and beauty standards.

4.3.4. Artificial Set Design and Critique of Perfection

The visual design of Barbieland resembles a toyhouse or artificial fantasy world:

- unrealistic architecture,
- plastic environments,
- bright colors,
- and exaggerated symmetry.

This artificiality is highly significant from a feminist perspective.

The perfect visual world symbolizes the unrealistic ideals women are expected to embody in real life. Barbieland visually reflects:

- perfection without flaws,
- happiness without emotional complexity,
- and beauty without authenticity.

MDA reveals that the film uses artificial aesthetics to critique patriarchal consumer culture, where femininity is often commercialized and idealized through unrealistic images. The artificial visual environment therefore becomes a metaphor for socially constructed femininity.

4.3.5. Cinematography and Female Subjectivity

Camera techniques also establish a feminist connection with aestheticism. At

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the beginning of the film:

- Barbie is frequently shown through glamorous close-ups,
- centered framing,
- soft lighting,
- and visually perfect compositions.

These cinematic choices initially position Barbie as an object of admiration, reflecting how women are traditionally viewed through the “male gaze.”

However, as the film progresses:

- camera framing becomes emotionally intimate,
- close-ups focus on vulnerability rather than beauty,
- and visual perfection becomes disrupted.

This shift in cinematography reflects Barbie’s psychological awakening and feminist self-awareness. MDA studies how camera movement and visual perspective transform Barbie from an object of visual pleasure into an independent subject with emotions, thoughts, and agency.

4.3.6. Feminism Through Visual Contradictions

A major feminist aspect of the film lies in its use of visual contradiction and irony.

For example:

- the film appears cheerful and beautiful,
- yet discusses emotional suffering, patriarchy, insecurity, and identity crisis.

This contrast creates feminist satire. The glamorous aesthetics hide deeper critiques of:

- gender inequality,

- objectification,
- and social pressure.

MDA uncovers how visual beauty and feminist criticism coexist simultaneously. The audience is visually attracted to the film while being intellectually challenged by its ideological messages.

4.3.7. Female Identity and Beauty Culture

The film strongly critiques beauty culture through aesthetic representation.

Barbie's identity initially depends upon:

- physical perfection,
- appearance,
- and external validation.

The film visually demonstrates how women are socialized to define themselves through beauty standards. Every aesthetic detail in Barbieland reinforces the expectation that femininity must remain visually pleasing. However, Barbie's eventual rejection of perfection symbolizes feminist resistance against these expectations. Through MDA, aesthetic transformation becomes symbolic of identity transformation.

4.3.8. Feminism and the Rejection of Objectification

The film's aesthetics initially encourage visual admiration of Barbie, but later challenge the audience to see her beyond appearance. This shift is central to feminist ideology. Through:

- emotional dialogue,
- vulnerable facial expressions,
- disrupted visual perfection,
- and symbolic costume changes,

the film emphasizes Barbie's humanity rather than her physical beauty alone.

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MDA reveals that the film intentionally moves from:

- objectification → subjectivity,
- perfection → authenticity,
- performance → individuality.

Thus, aestheticism becomes a feminist tool for reclaiming female identity from patriarchal standards.

4.3.9. Auditory and Verbal Support of Feminist Aestheticism

Although visual modes dominate the film's aestheticism, auditory and verbal modes also reinforce feminist themes.

A. Music and Soundtrack

Cheerful music initially supports the fantasy of perfect femininity. However, emotional music later accompanies Barbie's identity crisis, exposing the emotional burden behind perfection.

B. Feminist Dialogue

Dialogues such as Gloria's monologue directly criticize contradictory expectations imposed upon women. These verbal elements strengthen the feminist meanings already communicated visually. Thus, feminism in the film emerges through the interaction of:

- visual beauty,
- emotional sound,
- and ideological language.

4.3.10. Aestheticism as Feminist Resistance

Ultimately, the film transforms aestheticism into a form of feminist resistance. Instead of rejecting femininity entirely, the film reclaims feminine aesthetics and uses them critically.

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The movie suggests that:

- femininity itself is not the problem,
- but the patriarchal control over feminine identity is problematic.

By exaggerating feminine aesthetics, the film exposes how society constructs and controls female appearance.

Therefore, aestheticism becomes:

- political,
- ideological,
- and feminist.

The beauty of the film is intentionally used to critique the systems that define women according to beauty. Through Multimodal Discourse Analysis, it becomes evident that the film's visual beauty is not merely decorative but ideological. Aestheticism functions as a feminist language that exposes the contradictions, pressures, and performative nature of gender identity within patriarchal society.

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