
The Controversial of Overfishing Displayed in *Seaspiracy* Documentary Movie

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Abstract

This research aims to discover the portrayal of controversy, the environmental impact, and the prevention of overfishing in the documentary *Seaspiracy*. This research uses a qualitative description method from a semiotic perspective. Until now, the research has been discussed on overfishing on fisherman's income and analysis of the law's review of overfishing, but the research of controversy of overfishing portrays no study has explored to use of semiotic perception. Semiotics is a science that examines signs. In interpreting signs, the researchers use Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis. This model is famous for its triangle of meaning: the sign, object, and interpretant. The result of this research is that there are elements of a sign portraying the controversy of overfishing: Bycatch, the Fishing Industry, the Statement: "Stop Eating Marine Animals," and Marine Stewards Council (MSC) certification. The four controversial portrayals will deeply to analysis from semantics perspective to produce the significant meaning based on the scene appeared in documentary movie itself. In conclusion, the semiotic perception will increase students' understanding of linguistics through signs, objects, and interpretant

Keywords: controversial, overfishing, semiotic, documentary movie

INTRODUCTION

Disagreement makes people hostile toward one another. It is not uncommon for people to say or do things that spark conflicts, and the ensuing disagreements and controversies, but the word "controversy" is typically reserved for events that receive widespread media attention.

On the other hand, controversy arising from genuine, in-depth themes in real life is known as controversy (Hess, 2009). Controversy can lead to good things. For instance, it can draw attention to serious concerns and drive genuine change and progress. Controversy can also inspire critical thinking and questioning one's own ideas, broadening one's worldview.

Based on (Pal, 2012) controversy is a debate or difference of opinion about something that gives rise to very contrasting opinions. This involves a war of words. It can be concluded that there is no argument if there are no opposing ideas, plans, interests, or opinions on problems. Additionally, without a well-defined question or

questions to be addressed, argument cannot result in effective decisions.

Controversy discussion is a discourse that brings disagreements together and assumes good communication skills (Levinson, 2006). This refers to speaking in accordance with a group's emotive and intellectual instructions, which work to encourage open, inclusive, and undistorted communication.

Overfishing occurs when a kind of fish is taken faster than the species' stock line to produce a replacement (Kurlansky, 2011). Overfishing depletes target and non-target species, indirectly affects marine populations and communities, and alters marine ecosystems.

Overfishing is a form of overfishing so that the fish population decreases progressively, and eventually, nothing else can be caught. (Coleman & Williams, 2002) that overfishing is a major problem in the marine environment due to excessive fishing activities that have caused population decline, a decrease in species and genetic diversity, and wide-ranging consequences for damage to

trophic levels and ecosystems.

The exploitation of new fisheries enabled sustainable catch growth, but the catch has been reduced since the 1980s, and it can be concluded that marine resources are limited (Shao, 2009). Stocks of large fish have been down 90% since 1950, so fisheries have started fishing in the food chain (Luo et al., 2012).

Many lands have great ocean resource potential, including coral reefs, fish, shrimps, and shellfish. As part of its potential and economic value is high enough, marine fisheries tend to experience large-scale exploitation that would cause overfishing (Cribb, Robert, 2009).

Related to its frequency, this issue has attracted the attention of many parties, especially marine experts, and environmentalists. The mass media also convey this issue through print media. For example, books, magazines, and electronic media, such as film. Movie makers are interested in making the issue a platform for delivering facts or messages to the public. The movie not only acts as entertainment but potentially media education, which can effectively communicate the message of education, even affecting someone's perspective (Barsam & Monahan, 2016).

Regarding the statement above, the researchers choose a movie as an object of research. The movie continuously records growing and evolving social reality that is mirrored on screen (Sobur, 2004). The movie has the potential to communicate with people by affecting their view of something based on the social reality that occurs as part of the learning process. Hence, the researchers found a documentary entitled *Seaspiracy* related to the issue under discussion in this research. The documentary movie attracted much attention and was trending on social media because the movie displays how the environment impacts marine life and the dark side facts behind the fishing industry.

The *Seaspiracy* documentary movie examines environmental impacts, especially the damage to marine ecosystems, in-depth by several marine experts and environmentalists. It is also presented with an explanation of the dangers arising from overfishing. Moreover, *Seaspiracy* reaped a lot of controversies. Controversy can be defined as a debatable argument in the altercation and raises controversy in the community (Sheppard et al., 2011). The controversy in *Seaspiracy* arose because so many marine animals were explored for human consumption. One of the controversies of this movie is accused of being one of these campaigns to become vegan and stop consuming sea yields. However, that would not be wise because

many depend on it for economic and nutritional value (Pauly, 2021).

The previous research about overfishing has been discussed. The researchers have found several previous research that discusses overfishing, for example, (Wati, 2014) analyzes the theme of the impact of overfishing on fisherman's income before and after the overfishing period. Another point of view from (Amin, 2021), about the regulation of international sea law related to overfishing and the application of law in Indonesia to overfishing.

Although the two previous research above discusses similar issues of overfishing as prime sources, they have different spheres of scope. Wati's research analysis is on fishermen's income, while Amin's research is on law review. As a result, after reading and understanding the results of previous research, the researchers conclude that this research has different results. The researchers only focus on the controversy that describes overfishing in marine populations in the movie. This controversy will investigate from semiotic perceptions (Trifonas, 2021) understand it, and make meaning? (The theoretical basis of this article and elements of its expression have been drawn from Peter Pericles Trifonas. (1998).

In documentaries, semiotic perception can be used to comprehend the controversy surrounding overfishing. The study of sign systems, sign processes, and sign functions is known as semiotics (Long, 2019). The meaning represents an object in or by another object (Setyawan & Wiraatmaja, 2018). The sign or representing object could be a word, a novel, a gesture, a reaction in the brain, or even a city, depending on the status of the represented object. The sign does not belong to a group of things. A "functional" unit is a sign (Prasojowati et al., 2019).

In general, signs contain two forms. First, signs can explain (either directly or indirectly) something with a certain meaning. Second, the sign communicates the purpose of the meaning. So, every sign is directly related to the object. Signs directly represent reality (Sobur, 2001). Peirce's theory is considered by experts as a grand theory in semiotics, with the assumption that the idea is comprehensive, namely a structural description of all signification systems. Charles Sanders Peirce is known for his triadic model and his trichotomies concept, which consists of the following: Representamen is the form received by a sign or functions as a sign; Anything that alludes to a sign is an object. something linked to the reference that is represented by a representation; The interpretant is a sign that a person has regarding

the thing that a sign refers to.

These three concepts of semiotic analysis will be applied to investigate the issues that appear in *Seaspiracy* documentary movie.

METHODS

This paper uses qualitative methods to understand a phenomenon from the paper's subject. In this paper, the researchers choose a descriptive qualitative method. According to (Sandelowski, 2000), Primary or fundamental qualitative description is descriptive rather than interpretive, unlike grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, or narrative analysis. The aim is to review, identify, evaluate, and interpret all available research with exciting topics or phenomena. The theoretical framework in research and a literature review must be organized in an excellent way to provide a systematic explanation of the variable connections to answer the problem of research (Triandini et al., 2019).

This research produces descriptive data from written or spoken words about an event that can be observed. The descriptive data to be generated is to analyze the controversial depiction of overfishing on the environmental impact and its prevention in the documentary *Seaspiracy* by using Charles Sander Peirce's semiotic model. Based on Charles Sander Peirce, there are three stages of semiotic analysis: sign, object, and interpretant. The sign stage describes the fundamental and physically perceptible form of a sign, and the object stage is the social context that becomes the reference of the sign/something. The third stage is the interpretant, which is to see how the meaning of signs containing controversial elements of overfishing on environmental impacts seen from the phenomena that occur in the *Seaspiracy* documentary movie.

Research Design

This investigation utilizes an expressive subjective strategy. As Ragin (Nassaji, 2015) indicates, it offers complex portrayals and attempts to explain networks of significance. This strategy will gather the information, particularly the collocation information, through the movie picked. At that point, keep gathering vital information ground the hypothesis through a library look. The researchers are not just viewing the film but also looking through the books which correspond with this paper to help and give conversation explicitly. After viewing the movie repeatedly, the researchers will significantly focus on it and summarize those focuses found so it can be easier to

analyze.

Data Source of Research

This research is focused on the semiotic perception that can be displayed in controversial parts of the overfishing on *Seaspiracy* documentary movie. The researchers use Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis because it contains signs, objects, and interpretant. The data sources for this semiotic analysis appear on controversial portrayals in the *Seaspiracy* documentary movie.

Instrument of Research

This research mainly focuses on signs, objects, and interpretants based on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis. The research requires a good instrument to obtain the data. The instruments are mentioned, such as the *Seaspiracy* documentary movie, the laptop, the e-book as a main priority book source, and notes. So, the main instrument is to collect and analyze the data taken. Then, it continues to classify the sign, object, and interpretant through the *Seaspiracy* documentary movie.

Data Collection

This research takes several steps to get a good result: First, the researchers repeatedly watch the *Seaspiracy* documentary movie. Second, it takes notes on what the researchers consider important and needs. Then, the researchers look for book references, such as an e-book, suitable for this movie's research. Next, the researchers categorized the symbol that the researchers had found based on the relevant theory. Finally, the researchers begin to discuss the data found carefully.

Data Analysis

The next steps, the researchers begin to analyze the data based on the relevant book sources that the researchers had collected. The steps are as follows: The researchers show the data found. The researchers analyze data using relevant book sources, especially Charles Sanders Peirce. The researchers chose the *Seaspiracy* documentary movie as the main object to be analyzed. The researchers find concrete data about controversy portrayed from semiotic perception. Fifth, the researchers classify the controversy portrayed by semiotic analysis of Charles Sanders Peirce's theory and discuss it in detail.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Controversy Portrayal of Overfishing in *Seaspi-*

racy Documentary Movie

The researchers discovered four controversies portrayed in the *Seaspiracy* documentary movie. Those are bycatch, the fishing industry, the statement “stop eating marine animals, and Marine Stewards Council (MSC) Certification. The following four parts of controversial of overfishing as a result to be analyzed.

Bycatch

Bycatch is the term used to describe the unintended entanglement of non-target fish, marine mammals, sea turtles, and other aquatic life with fishing gear. This can happen when fishing nets, traps, and lines are set up to target a certain species of fish but end up capturing other marine creatures that are nearby. For marine ecosystems, as well as for commercial and artisanal fishing activities, bycatch is a serious problem. The unintended capture and death of many bycaught species, which are at risk of overfishing, can have negative effects on the marine environment. The use of selective fishing gear, modifications to fishing methods, and the creation of new technology are all efforts to minimize the capture of non-target species.

Fishing Industry

The harvesting, processing, and distribution of fish and other seafood products are all included in the definition of the fishing industry, which includes both the commercial and artisanal sectors. This sector includes a wide range of activities, such as the distribution of fish and seafood products to consumers, commercial fishing operations, aquaculture (fish farming), processing, and packaging. The fishing business provides a percentage of the world’s food supply and supports the livelihoods of millions of people throughout the globe. There are numerous ways to conduct fishing operations, such as trawling, longlining, gillnetting, and purse seining. Numerous issues, such as overfishing, bycatch, dwindling fish stocks, and the consequences of climate change, face the fishing sector.

Statement: “Stop Eating Marine Animals”

“Stop Consuming Marine Animals” is a statement advocating for the reduction or elimination of fish and other seafood consumption. This is a common remark used by individuals and organizations concerned with the environmental effects of the fishing industry, such as overfishing, bycatch, and the destruction of marine habitats. Reducing seafood consumption can have a good effect on marine ecosystems, but it is

not the only solution to the problems facing the fishing industry. Other strategies, such as enhancing fishing methods, encouraging aquaculture, and decreasing waste in the seafood supply chain, are also essential for guaranteeing the sustainability of the fishing sector and protecting marine ecosystems for future generations.

Marine Stewards Council (MSC) Certification

Global non-profit Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) promotes sustainable fishing. MSC certification rewards sustainable fishing. A fishing operation is independently assessed by the MSC for fish stock health, marine environment impact, and fisheries management. An MSC-certified fishing enterprise can use the MSC eco-label on its products to indicate sustainable seafood to consumers. This labelling promotes sustainable fishing and informs consumers about seafood purchases. MSC certification is the premier seafood industry sustainability certification program, and its eco-label is being utilized by seafood retailers, wholesalers, and restaurants to distinguish sustainable goods.

DISCUSSION

The researchers will discuss specifically to the controversial have found. The researchers used Peirce theory. Peirce’s “semiotic” triadic sign model focused on the sign’s object, interpretant, and relationship. Peirce believed that signs reflect their objects by convention, but the interpreter creates meaning. The interpretant represents the sign’s meaning in the mind and can be a new sign for the item. Peirce’s theory implies that a sign’s meaning is dynamically produced through interpretation. Peirce’s theory emphasis on sign, object, and interpretant of semiotic analysis.

Bycatch Sign

A semantic sign represents an object, notion, or idea. Symbols like words, images, and gestures indicate what they signify. Signs are essential to communication and meaning.



Figure 1. Catch Fish 1

Object

The Figure 1 displays a catch of fish in the form of sharks that were captured using fishing nets or purse seines.

Interpretant

Bycatch, or the accidental grasp of non-objective species, for example dolphins, sea turtles, and seabirds, occurs anywhere fishing occurs as depicted in Figure 1. World-wide nets and ropes are deployed daily. Modern fishing gear is invisible and powerful, capturing the desired fish species plus anything else in its path. Numerous marine species, such as turtles, dolphins, and juvenile fish, are carried in with the catch and discarded overboard when they are dead or in critical condition.

In conclusion, the bycatch is a contentious topic because if overfishing is carried out, then the number of bycatches will increase, which can result in the disruption of fish populations, which in turn can lead to the extinction of fish.

Fishing Industry Sign

A semantic sign represents an object, notion, or idea. Symbols like words, images, and gestures indicate what they signify. Signs are essential to communication and meaning.



Figure 2. Fishing Industry

Object

The Figure 2 depicts a row of recently captured sharks by the fishing business.

Interpretant

The widespread killing of sharks for their fins by the fishing industry is the aspect of overfishing that has sparked the most debate in this setting. Which populations of maritime habitats are being negatively impacted.

In conclusion, this is a contentious situation because, if hunting is allowed to continue, it will have a negative impact on the populations of

marine ecosystems. The movie demonstrates the fact that sharks are the most dangerous predators in the ocean and that they play a crucial role in marine ecosystems.

Statement: "Stop Eating Marine Animals"

Sign

A semantic sign represents an object, notion, or idea. Symbols like words, images, and gestures indicate what they signify. Signs are essential to communication and meaning.



Figure 3. Represent the suggestion

Object

The Figure 3 depicts a narration from the movie that explains how to protect the ocean by abstaining from consuming marine life.

Interpretant

The movie explicitly urges viewers to cease eating fish in this scene. Given that some people consume fish as their primary source of protein daily, many fisheries scientists and members of the general public view this as a contentious subject. On the other side, marine animals are the primary source of income for fishermen and the fishing business. Thus, the advice to avoid eating fish in this movie drew a lot of flak.

In conclusion, from this scene, a sign from the movie footage appears that reads, "Avoid Eating Marine Animals," with the interpretation being you should stop eating marine animals if you wish to rescue the sea. However, while obtaining marine items can be significant to some people, this is still regarded as contentious.

Marine Stewards Council (MSC) Certification Sign

A semantic sign represents an object, notion, or idea. Symbols like words, images, and gestures indicate what they signify. Signs are essential to communication and meaning.

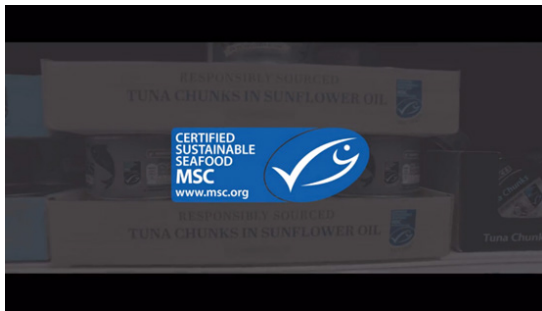


Figure 4. Label of MSC



Figure 5. Label of MSC in Seafood Product

Object

The Figure 4 is an image of the MSC logo and Figure 5 shows an MSC label on fish products.

Interpretant

The MSC label is a contentious representation of this scene. The movie explains that this label was created for certifications of sustainable fisheries. The truth is that this designation does not at all ensure sustainable fish, as the movie makes clear. Ali, the primary character, and the Sea Shepherd group, which manages the MSC label, are having this discussion.

In conclusion, a logo from a certified MSC is shown on both a sign and an object. The researchers then discovered that the interpretant in this scene is a sign in the shape of an eco-label as a guarantee of sustainable fish, but that this label is considered unsuitable, which sparked controversy.

CONCLUSION

The portrayal of controversy in this research might be defined as an ongoing disagreement or argument regarding a social topic, typically involving multiple points of view. The controversial sign aspects of overfishing identified in *Seaspiracy* as seen from the perspective of the semiotic analysis of the Charles Sanders Peirce theory include: bycatch, the fishing industry, the statement

“Stop Eating Marine Animals,” and certification from the Marine Stewards Council (MSC).

For the bycatch the bycatch is a contentious topic because if overfishing is carried out, then the number of bycatches will increase, which can result in the disruption of fish populations. In fishing industry side is a contentious situation because, if hunting is allowed to continue, it will have a negative impact on the populations of marine ecosystems. The statement “stop eating marine animals” with the interpretation being you should stop eating marine animals if you wish to rescue the sea. However, while obtaining marine items can be significant to some people, this is still regarded as contentious. The last Marine Stewards Council certificate is a sign in the shape of an eco-label as a guarantee of sustainable fish, but that this label is considered unsuitable, which sparked controversy

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