

## A Semiotic Study: Understanding *Otaku* Culture of *Tsundere* Meme

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### Abstract

Artikel ini membahas tentang makna dari sebuah meme yang dikenal dengan nama *tsundere*. *Tsundere* tersebut memiliki arti “kasar yang berubah menjadi halus”, yang mana terinspirasi dari sebuah fenomena media social sebagai wujud perkembangan teknologi internet. Fenomena tersebut juga muncul dari adanya budaya Jepang yang dikenal dengan sebutan *otaku*, yang mana hanya mencari informasi anime dan manga. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan makna secara simbol, ikon dan indeks yang membentuk makna dua jenis *tsundere* yang menyebar dan menjadi bahan pembicaraan di dunia maya, khususnya dalam ranah anime dan manga. Penelitian ini menerapkan teori Semiotik dari Saussurean (1974) dan pengertian makna simbol, ikon dan indeks yang dikemukakan Chandler (2001) melalui teori milik Pierce, untuk membahas makna simbol. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode dokumentasi dalam pengumpulan data. Data-data yang telah terkumpul kemudian dianalisis dengan metode kualitatif. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa semua simbol dalam meme *tsundere* tersebut memiliki arti cinta; ikon dalam meme *tsundere* memperlihatkan arti mimik wajah karakter; dan indeks dari meme *tsundere* adalah perbedaan jenis kelamin dari karakter dalam meme. Makna sebenarnya dari meme *tsundere* tersebut ditunjukkan dengan adanya simbol, ikon dan indeks dan memberikan pengertian umum tentang *tsundere* itu sendiri.

*Kata kunci: semiotik, otaku, meme, tsundere.*

### 1. Background of the Study

The world is obsessed to become familiar with the rapid growth of technology nowadays. As the obsession or the needs of using the internet grows stronger, the development of the internet is also increasing. Not only for the sake of knowledge that the internet serves but also entertainment media grows unlimited. One of the richest subcultures that show the rapid growth on the use of internet is coming from the *otaku* culture. It has the meaning of “a person who is obsessed with a popular culture to the detriment of their social skills”. The desire of those who are searching for the information about *anime* and *manga* drives them to use the internet even more often, even making them as their part of life. Downloading, reading, drawing, collecting stuff, even communicating through the internet are the main reason they stick with the internet.

Japan has already lived under the world of characters, fictional or things which are related to the world of two dimensions (2D) or three dimensions (3D), which makes Japan has the invaluable resources of semiotics. Semiotics is a study of sign, which processes a meaningful communication through pictures or images. The world itself has known the recently trending internet viral phenomenon that is known as “*tsundere*”. This kind of phenomenon has been spread all over the world by the use of *otaku*. Moreover, this study intends to focus on the study of semiotic by taking the phenomenon of *tsundere* that becomes viral from *otaku* as the consumer to the general media, especially on the communication process that the *otaku* uses from developing *tsundere* into *meme* as an entertainment to communicative sign of communication. By aiming to identify the signification of symbols and icons found in two types of *tsundere* in the *meme* and analyze the indexical signification of *Tsundere meme* implied in two types of *Tsundere* characteristics and the representation of its meaning to form the sign, the data were taken from a social media namely Facebook that went viral on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014. It revealed the certain subject about the *tsundere meme* through this study.

## **2. Scope of the Study**

Since this study uses the study of Semiotic approach, the discussion should be limited and focused on the main point in order to conduct an effective research. The focuses of this study were identifying the signification of symbols and icons found in two common types of *tsundere* in the *meme* featured in the viral Facebook post on June 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 using the dyadic Semiotics theory by Saussure to form the concept of *tsundere* in anime and manga. Moreover, describing and explaining the indexical signification of the two types of *tsundere* in the viral meme posted in Facebook on June 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 as the representation of its real meaning was concluded into the scope of study.

## **3. Aims of the Study**

The research analysis focused on finding the signification of *Tsundere meme* found in the viral post of Facebook on June 9<sup>th</sup> 2014:

1. To identify the signification symbols and icons found in two types of *Tsundere* in the *meme* featured on the viral Facebook post on June 9<sup>th</sup> 2014.

2. To analyze the indexical signification of *Tsundere meme* implied in two types of *Tsundere* characteristics and the representation of its meaning to form the sign.

#### **4. Research Method**

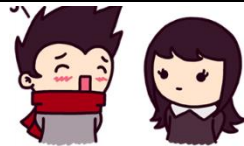










This study is a library research; therefore, in method and technique of collecting data, the documentation methods were applied by searching technique, note-taking and image-cropping technique. Followed by the method and technique of analyzing data, this study applied the qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research is multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalist approach to its subject matter. This research was supported by the comparative technique. It was used to find the similarity and the dissimilarity of the data based on the knowledge of interpreting. The analysis of the significations was conducted by the Saussurean's dyadic framework (1916) cited by Chandler (2001) with the studies of subculture applied in the elements of signs according to the otaku culture's eyes.




#### **5. Finding and Discussion**

The discussion was separated into: the signification of symbols, icons of *tsundere* meme; and the indexical signification of *tsundere* meme from the viral Facebook post on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014. It were displayed in tables including the explanation under the table.

##### **1. Signification of Symbols and Icons of *Tsundere* Meme**



Saussurean dyadic approach, the semiotic analysis, was applied to analyze each type of the two categories of *tsundere* and its trigger, while the division of signs themselves was analyzed using Chandler's division of signs into three categories known as symbol, icon and index, in which these divisions were explained further using Saussurean's dyadic form. The table presented below is the general analysis in brief explanation of the distinction of the sign found in the confession of a character to provoke the two types of *tsundere* to come out in one of the characters:

Sign		
Symbol	Signifier	Signified
Love	Our love type is...	The love sentence: Unfinished sentence is shown by the triple punctuation of “...” (Ellipses)
Love	Um...I have always loved you!	Confession: Expressive Language of love
Couple		The figures: a. Picture representation of human b. Character (Fictional)
Blushing		Facial expression (“blushing” due to embarrassment, anger, or romantic stimulation)
Raising eyebrows		Facial expression: raising both of his eyebrows due to embarrassment or romantic stimulation
Love	Um...I have always loved you! 	Sounding: Character’s sounding
Tsundere	oww... it hurts!  W-Why would you say something like that?! It's not like I feel all happy inside you stupid idiot!!!	Expressive language: a. Feeling hurt b. <i>Tsundere</i>
Pain		X Bandage as a symbol of pain
Folding Arms		Folding Arms forming cross arms on chest exudes the element of anger
Tsundere	<b>Tsundere!</b>	A word as the explanation of the picture
Sign	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/think.nu.official">facebook.com/think.nu.official</a>	Link
Sign		Rough Sign
Couple		The figures: c. Picture representation of human d. Character (Fictional)
Crying		Facial expression of sadness: Crying
Steam Hot		Human expression: Running Hot from having an extreme blush with steam effect (Metaphor)

Blushing		Facial expression of <i>tsundere</i> : Blushing
Frowning		Facial expression of <i>tsundere</i> : Frowning
Pouting		Facial expression of <i>tsundere</i> : Pouting

The symbols *tsundere* meme brought the meaning or the content implied by the sign provided by the image, where in the other hand, icon of the *tsundere* meme resembled the physical thing between the signal and the meaning itself. The symbols found in the *tsundere* meme were mostly formed by sentences, or in other hand, usually referred to as the verbal sign of love, where the icons in the other hand, mostly appeared to be the facial expression of the *tsundere* to be depicted in the image. Thus, the signification of symbols and icons of *tsundere* meme brought the concept that *tsundere* only happened in the love situation.

## 2. Indexical Signification of *Tsundere* Meme

Sign	
Signifier	Signified
	Sex distinction: Male
	Sex distinction: Female

The indexical sign found in the *tsundere* meme showed one thing: the sex identification, where this sign did not only appear in the confession type in the *tsundere* meme, but also in the two types of *tsundere* part of image. As Chandler cited in Pierce's theory, the index is connected to its object as a matter of fact, where there is a real connection or a direct physical connection'. An indexical sign is like a fragment torn away from the object, unlike an icon, an index stands unequivocally for this or that existing thing. Similarity or analogy is not what defines the index, but anything which focusses the attention is an index. Indexical signs direct the attention to their objects by blind compulsion. (Pierce, 1931)

## 6. Conclusion

The analysis found that the symbol of *tsundere* meme is shy behavior in confessing love. The significations of symbols are the love sentence and X-Bandage. The gesture of folding arms done by the female character, which is the symbol of one of the type of *tsundere*, the *tsun* part, or anger also become the symbol of the *tsundere* meme. Furthermore, the significations of icons represent the facial expression made by each of the characters as a symbol of love. The male character is depicted to have a blush and raise its eyebrows while confessing his love. Crying is a symbol of sadness after being hit by the female character, as in the same time she is blushing, frowning and pouting. It is shown that the icon of the female character is the facial expression of *tsundere* behavior. As it is found in the picture, the other aforementioned icons are the representation of the human figure, which are fictional character representing it. Based on the second problem, the gender distinction found in the indexical signification is one common thing found in the cultural knowledge in the place where the *tsundere* came from, which is Japan; however, there is an extensively more complex phenomenon beyond the common physical differences identified by the common knowledge from the cultural place.

## 7. Bibliography

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